

May
2009

digit Fast Track to FREEWARE



paint.net

Multimedia

Imaging

Organisation

Graphics

Desktop enhancements

System management

Internet

Productivity



AVG
Anti-Virus System



Redo Demon



pictolib



Picasa



BURN4
FREE



Imageforge
MASTER EDITION



UNUSUAL
WINAMP

YOUR HANDY GUIDE TO EVERYDAY TECHNOLOGY

Fast Track to Freeware

By Team Digit

Credits

The People Behind This Book

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May 2009

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Introduction

The piracy rates are so high, that Free software does not really mean much to the regular computer user. The reasoning is that since all of it is free anyway, what's the big difference between pirated software and freeware. This however, is not the case.

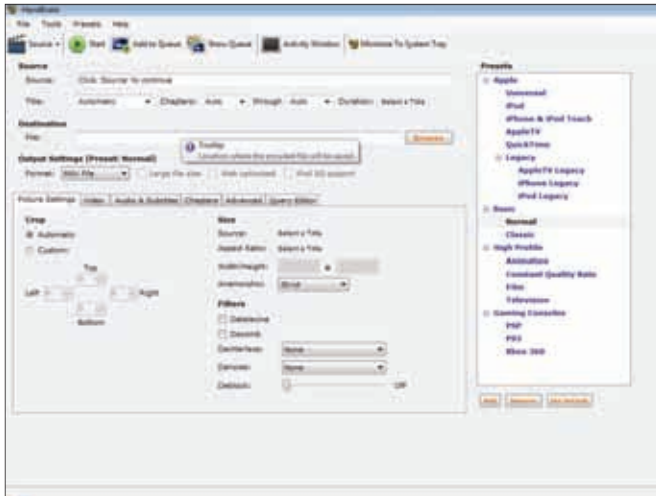
A lot of free software out there is designed and coded by individuals and communities that saw a serious lack in the functionality of existing software. There is no commercial need to create and market a product that is an alternative to Windows Explorer, no one would buy such a product. However, a free alternative file explorer, by the name of Midnight Commander, with simple and thoughtful features such as a folder size display and batch renaming capabilities, outshines Windows Explorer. For mysterious reasons, free software tend to have drastically smaller file sizes, and memory footprints than their commercial counterparts. Wavepad is a fully featured sound editor, which takes less than 500 KB of the system space. Free software is simple to use, with advanced capabilities hidden away till you require them. IrfanView and uTorrent are both examples of such software.

These benefits are true for almost every free software in existence, and there is a free software for every task you might want to perform on your computer, from batch encoding audio files to cleaning up the system registry. This Fast Track tackles each task as a workshop, with step-by-step instructions on how to accomplish specific tasks with freeware.

Multimedia

1.1 Ripping a Movie

Handbrake is a free software that allows you to rip your favourite videos into a number of different formats for various devices. It achieves this through a number of preset settings.



Handbrake Start Interface

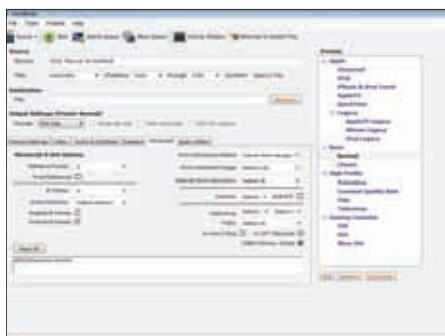
Or you can manually override the quality and output settings if you know what you're doing. The start interface is pretty simplistic as shown below:

As you can see the presets are numerous and besides support for iPods and film and television presets for the common consoles such as the X Box 360 and PS3 are also available. Even the PSP has not been missed.

While the output video codec's available are H.264 and MPEG-4, Handbrake supports output files in the following formats – MP4, M4V, MKV, AVI and OGM.

Certain presets have fixed resolutions and settings avail-

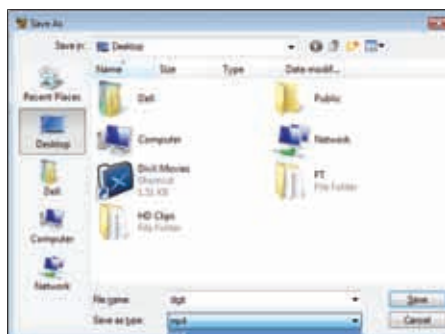
able which are visible under the tabs Picture Settings and Video. For advanced users there is also an Advanced tab that has been shown below. Most users will get by with the default settings as long as you correctly select



Encoding Settings

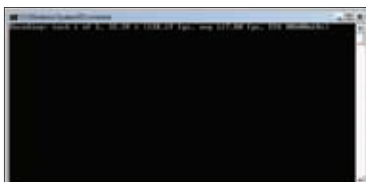
the kind of device you will be using to view the video.

Below we have an example of a video encoded for the iPhone/iPod Touch. Under Presets select Apple > iPhone & iPod Touch. Next under the tab Video you have the option of changing the codec and the frames per second. There are advanced settings also available – greyscale and 2-Pass Encoding. Check the latter option for better video quality although the encoding process will become time consuming. In the quality settings you can specify both or either of the target size



Video name

(in megabytes) and the average bitrate in kbps. We recommend keeping these values blank unless space is a constraint for you. Notice under Picture Settings the source resolution is shown. In case of a DVD video it will be 720 x 480 pixels.



Encoding

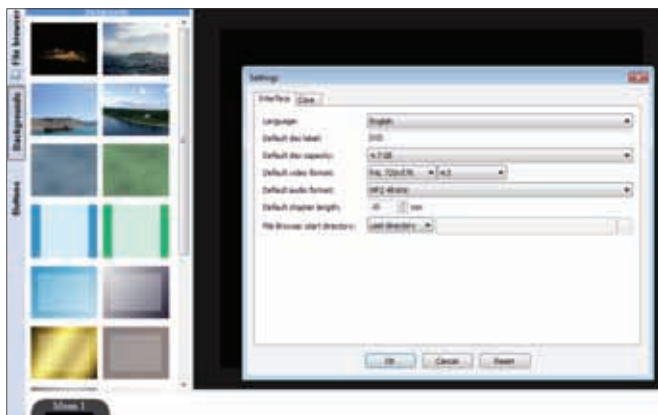
To select the video you want to convert click on the source tab. Under this tab there are two choices – you can either choose a video file or select an entire DVD video folder. Select video file and browse to where the file you wish to encode is located. Select the file and click on the Open tab. Now to select the destination file. Click on the orange coloured tab titled Browse. Name the file as you wish and also notice the drop down menu Save as type. There are five options, we chose .mp4, but for an iPod video you could also choose .avi. The other video formats are not recommended as Apple iPods will not be able to play them. Note that you can also select the file type from the drop down menu called Format which is visible under the Output Settings.

Once this is done all you need to do is click on the Start icon. You should see a window like this –

Once the video encoding is done, which takes around 20 minutes for a 100 MB .VOB file using 2-Pass encoding (on a 2.4 GHz Core 2 Duo processor), the file will be accessible from the location it was saved in.

1.2 Burning a multimedia DVD with titles and menu

DVD Styler is a neat little software with a variety of options available for creating your own video DVDs. It's a fairly light software with a very intuitive and simple menu layout. It supports burning DVD videos in both PAL and NTSC formats. Both single and dual layer discs are supported. The main software window contains three tabs stacked vertically to the left. The first tab File Browser lets you search for and select a video file. The next tab Backgrounds contains a number of tilesets to use



Menu and settings

as the background for the DVD menu. The final tab contains all possible buttons that you may wish to use which are actually small, embedded .xml scripts.

The Configuration menu has one option under it called Settings and this contains all the settings you can play around with including the disc capacity, disc label name, video and audio formats and settings for fixing the length of each chapter.

For creating a menu for a DVD video go to File > New. You'll get a window called Create a new DVD that looks like this:



Click OK. You will now see a blank menu called Menu 1 by default has been created. Next you need to go to the tab called File Browser and select the directory that contains the video files you want to use. Once the directory is selected you will see the files appear in a preview pane to the right of the directory structure. Adding these files to the DVD you are about to create entails dragging them to the project timeline panel at the bottom. Once these clips have been added your screen should



New DVD

look something like this.

Now to create a menu for your DVD clips. Go to Backgrounds tab and simply double click on any of the background images you like. Once the image has been set as the background for the menu you need to add buttons. Click on the Buttons tab. Buttons can be inserted into the menu by simply click-dragging any of the menu buttons on to the blank menu. By default this menu button will start playing the first video clip or the first chapter although this can be configured. If you wish to configure this added button simply right click on it and select > Properties.

You can add other buttons if you so wish. Once done select File > Save As and name the file. To burn this project select the orange coloured disc icon you should now get a burn window from where you can simply burn this project to a DVD disc or create and .ISO image to burn later. You can also select the DVD burner to use and the maximum write speed.

1.3 Transcoding a video files

Besides encoding videos for your favourite gadgets HandBrake is also a full fledged video transcoder. For the purpose of using this feature we will be converting a .VOB file from a DVD video disc to the .divx format. Once again under use the option Source > video file and browse to the location of the desired file and select it.

Now under Output settings select AVI file. Under the tab Video select the format of choice for the video codec choose MPEG-4 (XviD). If you like you can specify a target size or even the average bitrate although bear in mind that smaller values will affect quality adversely while larger values will increase the file size. We recommend leaving these values blank,



Transcoding

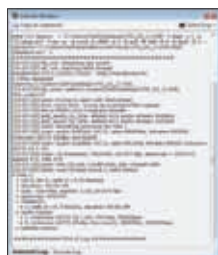


Encoding

but you can experiment if you wish.

Once you have selected the output destination and named the file click on start. The encoding window will appear as below

For users who want to see what exactly is going on there is an Activity Window option that will bring up a log file that should look something like this:



Log

1.4 Batch processing audio files

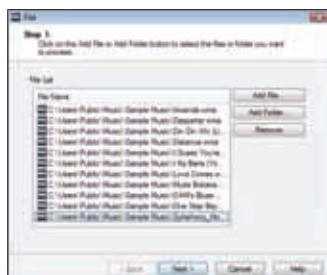
Wavepad is a very useful software for Windows that allows you to do a lot with sound. Editing voice and sound recordings, adding effects to them as well as batch editing audio files. Although at its most basic it's a simple sound editing software yet the powerful batch commands manipulate multiple audio files in various ways. Here's a look at the basic



Wavepad begin

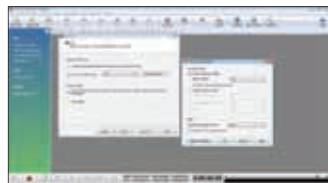
interface:

Batch processing involves running a series of repetitive tasks running automatically for multiple files. Go to Tools > Batch Converter. Click on Add File. Browse to the location of your audio files or you could also add a folder.



Music

Once the files have been added a window titled File appears and you are in step 1 of the process. Click Next. You can name the batch script file and save it. Below this is a pane called Command. Clicking on Add allows you to add actions to be performed on these files and there are numerous options to choose from. Suppose you want to change the sampling rate. Choose Convert Sample Rate. Once added this command will appear in the commands list. Now click Settings. You will see a drop down menu with all possible sample rates mentioned. We chose 44,100 as the sample rate. Click OK once done. Next we selected Normalize, follow the same steps to add normalize to the list of commands.



Once again you may configure the command you have selected.

Next you'll see the format options. There is a wide option of file formats to choose from. Select format options for the audio files. We chose .MP3 and now in the MP3 Encoder Settings you can further customise the output files as shown:



mp3



encoding audio

You may also select an output folder if you so desire. Note that if the file format is the same as the original files and you do not choose an output folder the files in the original folder will be overwritten.

Imaging

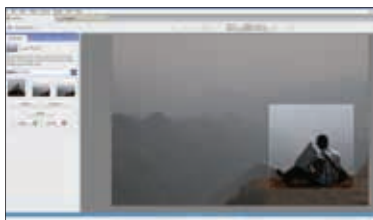
2.1 Touching up images

Images clicked with cameras can have minor yet disappointing faults that need to be corrected. At times, the image may be too bright, or too dark, or a particular colour which appeared bright may be too dull. Picasa 3 is a free tool from Google that can be used to fix up an image.

Once Picasa 3 starts up and is installed, it will automatically detect all the images on the computer. This can be changed during the installation, to make Picasa pick up only images that are in the My Documents folder. There is no option to disallow any kind of automatic detection, which is to make the software easy, but is also irritating. You can manually add images by going to File > Add Folder to Picasa. Once a folder of images is added to Picasa, a thumbnail of all the images shows up in the gallery. Double-click on any image to start touching up the image.

The most basic operations required to touch up an image are neatly displayed in the Basic Fixes tab. Select the operation you want to perform to bring up the operation-specific menu. If the subject is off centre, or only a part of the image needs to be focused on, you can crop the image. Picasa automatically detects interesting elements in an image, and focuses on that part of the image when you use the cropping tool.

There are a number of preset sizes, which are dimensions of common prints. You can also choose to use a custom size. One part of the image will be highlighted, which will be the image after cropping. Once a suitable selection is made, click on Apply. Note that all changes done in Picasa does not affect the original photo, only a version Picasa automatically highlights objects of the photo in Picasa.



A tilted image can be straightened up. To do this, click on straighten. When straightening an image, some information from the corners will be lost. Picasa zooms in and rotates the image while straightening it. A slider shows up along the bottom of the screen, which can be used to straighten the image either clockwise or anti-clockwise. The image can only be straightened for about 40 degrees of deviance.



Touching up is really simple with Picasa

If the image is too dark or too light, the Auto Contrast button will automatically fix the image. Auto Color will automatically remove unnecessary tint or cast of a colour from the image. The Fill Light slider that appears on selection of either of these controls can be used to change the shadow / highlight balance of the image. The more you drag the fill light slider to the right, the brighter the image will become. The I'm Feeling Lucky button is a unique feature in Picasa when it comes to image touching up software. It automatically fixes a number of these settings to make the image better. Use this if you are unsure of how exactly the image can be made better.

The most useful tool is the Retouch tool. It allows you to remove artefacts and blemishes in a photo. Select the tool, hover the cursor over the image and scroll up to zoom in. Change the dimension of the retouch brush. Now, click on the part of the image where the blemish is, and click on a nearby part of the image to remove the blemish. Picasa takes up image information from the second click, and replaces it over the blemish identified in the first click. Use as small a brush as possible, and click on a portion that is similar to the blemish for this to work properly. This operation is known



Use the Retouch tool to clean blemishes

as patching. Once you have clicked on the blemish, Picasa will replace the blemish with image information in real time, depending on where the cursor is.



The Tuning tab allows for more control over the shadows, highlights and colour of the image. There are three sliders for changing various aspects of the image. Note that increasing the Fill Light or Highlight too much will make a dark image very grainy, but bright. The Neutral Colour picker is used to select a black point in the image to which the rest of the images on the photograph can be mapped. Selecting the darkest point of the image usually works, but this step is not necessary. Playing with lighter points of the image will give tints to the image.

The Color Temperature slider changes the warmth of the image. This is how blue or red the image appears. Dragging the slider to the right makes the image redder, or warmer. Dragging the slider to the left makes the image bluer, or cooler. This effect should be used in moderation, and not when any source of light such as the sun or a light bulb is in the frame of the photograph.

2.2 Uploading images for hosting on the web

Picasa Web Albums is a great service for hosting your images online. Picasa provides 1 GB of storage space for a free account. You can create a number of albums, add tags to photographs, and share the link with friends and relatives. If you have a Google account, you don't need to sign up for a separate Picasa account.

Uploading photos to Picasa Web Albums is an easy process from Picasa 3. Right-click on any folder in the gallery, or from the list of folders, and select Upload to Web Albums. Enter your username and password, and the photos will be uploaded to Web Albums. By default, Picasa 3 reduces the size of

the images, which is useful on many counts. The bandwidth consumed by your internet connection will be reduced; it will take less time to upload all the photographs. The bandwidth consumed by users while downloading the photographs will be reduced. The original, high-quality versions of the photographs will be only with you, and you will be using a smaller fraction of the free space available to you.

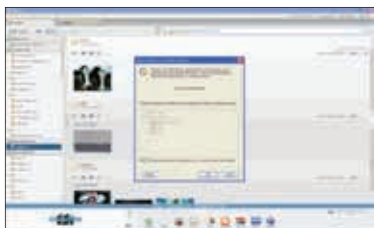
If you want to share high quality photos, it is better to package the entire set into an archive, and upload it on megaupload.com or rapidshare.com and then share the link. If you want to share high quality photos on your Picasa account only, Picasa 3 lets you choose to upload pictures without resizing them. However, anyone who wants to view these images will have to download them, as the web site will not display the high quality images.



Picasa Web Albums are a great way to share your images online

Uploading the images takes some time, so take a break from the computer. Once a folder is uploaded, you can select Sync to Web. Every time you add an image in the folder of the computer, the image will be automatically updated on the web. Even if you upload an image from another computer using a web interface to the album hosted on Picasa, the next time you start Picasa 3 on the computer you normally use, the photo will be downloaded into the folder on the disk.

You can also import all the photos from a Picasa account if you have the password. These photos will be stored on the local hard disk, but the photos you already have won't be downloaded. Go to File > Import from Web Albums and check all the albums that you want



Import images that aren't stored on your computer

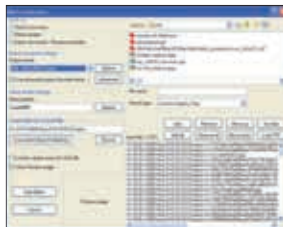
to import. The upload quality versions of the photograph will be downloaded to the local folder.

2.3 Batch processing images

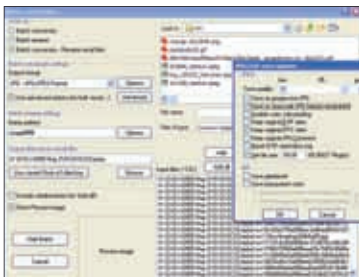
For creating galleries, uploading on the web, or sharing images over e-mail, it is necessary to batch process images. Batch processing can also be used to change the name of the images. IrfanView is an image viewer with great batch processing capabilities. Install Irfan View, and right-click on any image in a folder of images you want to batch process.

Then, right-click, select open with and choose Irfan View if you chose out of Irfan View as the default image viewer. Go to File > Batch Conversion/Rename or simply use the keyboard shortcut [B].

There are three basic options to start with, Batch conversion, Batch rename, and Batch conversion — rename result files. Choose one of these options. Next, add the files that have to be batched process. Clicking on Add All will add all the files in the folder to the list for batch processing. You can select a few files and add them individually. Once the files are queued up, select the file format. Irrespective of the format of the source image, this selected format will be the output of all the files. You can also choose to add all images in all the subfolders of a particular folder. Just check Include Subdirectories, and then click on Add All. Next, click on Options to bring up a menu of options relevant to the file format that you have selected. There are a number of settings in this

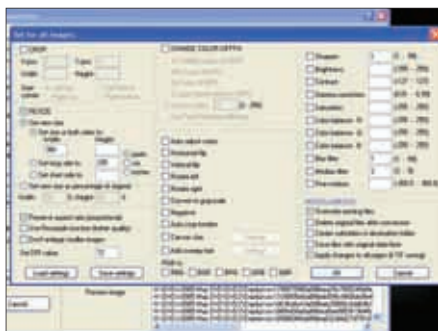


Batch conversion no longer needs additional software



Use advanced options for finer details

window that can be tweaked. You can reduce the file size by selecting lower quality, or selecting a specific file size. You can change the colour scale, or get rid of the EXIF data. For GIF to PNG or TIFF conversion, you can preserve transparencies or discard them. After suitable options are checked, click on OK.



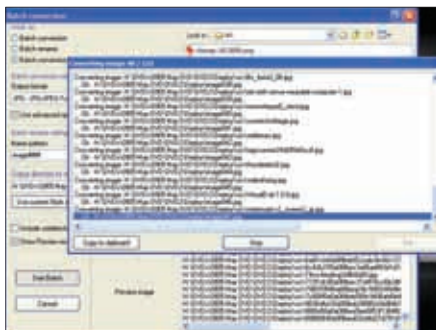
Once you are done, simply apply the style to all images

For access to the advanced options, check Use Advanced Options (for bulk resize) and click on Advanced. Although the menu says these advanced options are for bulk resize, they can be used for other purposes as well. There are two basic approaches to resize the photograph, which are cropping the photograph and resizing the photograph. For cropping the photograph, you can specify the relative x and y start and end positions for the crop operation. You can crop and resize a photograph simultaneously. The Resize menu has a number of options, you can specify a width or a height and automatically adjust the rest of the image in proportion, or specify both the dimensions of the image. The size can be measured in pixels, centimetres, inches or percentage values as per your convenience.

This menu also allows you to rotate the image, perform basic adjustments such as flipping the image or auto colour correct the image. The Add Overlay Text option can be used to include simple watermarks to the all the images in a folder, for uploading on third party sites. Some filtering options are also available, including blur, sharpen, brightness, contrast and gamma correction. If you have selected all the operations you want to perform, its a good idea to save the settings now. This will allow you to simply load the settings in case you want to perform the same operations on another folder of images. Settings are saved in an INI file that can be edited

in Notepad. To load settings, click on Load Settings and use Explorer to point the program to the INI file on the computer.

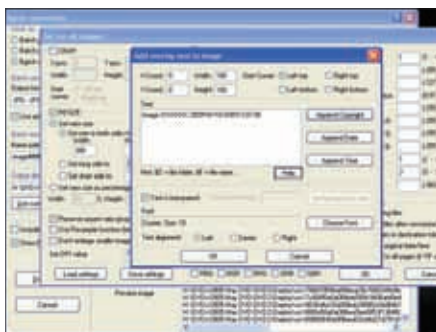
Choose a suitable output directory. Using the same directory as the input will overwrite the existing files. Now click on Start batch, and wait while the batch encoding occurs. The conversion will now take place, and a log of the conversion (with errors, if any) will be shown on screen. This log can be saved as a text file for future reference.



You can view log files and save it for later

2.4 Adding a Watermark to Images

If you are concerned about other people passing off your work as theirs, or if you want to identify your images, you can add a watermark on the images. Watermarks are text or image tags overlaid on the images, that cannot be eas-



You can protect your images with a watermark

ily removed on image editing programs. Watermarks are either located at the corners of the image, in the centre or over an important area of the image. IrfanView can be used to add a simple text watermark over a number of images at one go.

Open up an image in IrfanView, add the images that you want to add the watermark to, select an output directory, and click on Advanced. Check Add overlay text, then click on Settings.

The X and Y co-ordinates of the watermark have to be specified, along with the alignment and the corner along which the watermark will appear. You can use an internal code to add the file name into the watermark itself. If you want to add the copyright symbol, click on Append Copyright. The current date and time can be added as well. Click on Choose font to change the font of the watermark. Click on OK to apply the text overlay settings, OK to apply the batch conversion settings and Start Batch to apply the watermark to the selected images.

Watermark V2 is a small (630 KB) program that allows you to add elaborate watermarks to images. Just put in this month's DVD into the tray to find the program. Watermark V2 uses "profiles" to add watermarks to images. These profiles may be a combination of a number of images and text layers. A simple image and a word or two are sufficient for a watermark.



Adding watermarks is easy

Click on the profile window, the profile editor will show up. You can add images, resize the images, and add text to the profile. Bear in mind that the entire watermark will be much smaller than how it appears in this window. PNG, TIFF and GIF transparencies will be rendered as transparencies. You can choose to make a particular colour transparent, if necessary. Once you have created a satisfactory profile, you can save it. The entire profile can be given a transparency value, which will blend in with the photos once it is applied. Now,

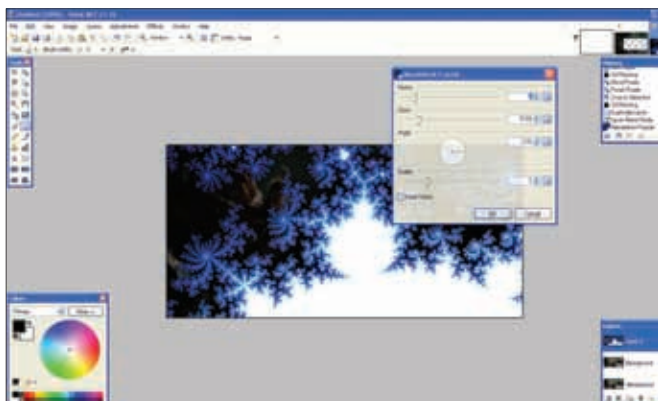
navigate through the file system and add all the files you want to apply the watermark to. Add the images to the Image List.

Change the location of the watermark. A number of preset locations are available in the drop down list. Choose one of these, and then

fine tune the positioning with a pixel based offset from the position you chose. Beneath the Start button, locate the folder



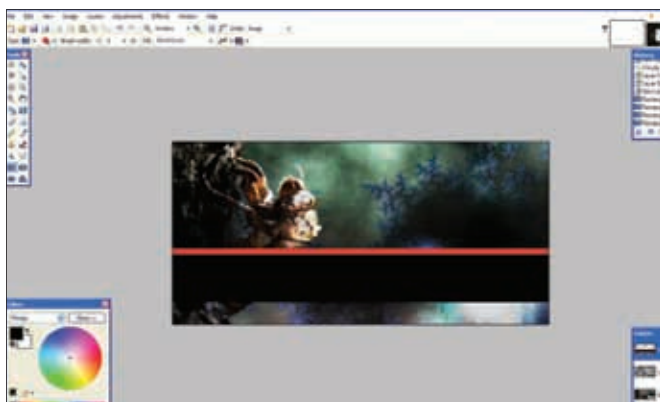
You can conveniently move your watermark around



The Mandelbrot fractal at work

where you want to output the resulting images. Note that if this is not selected, the images will be overwritten where they are. One of the interesting little features of Watermark V2 is that you get a live preview of the image as and when you are adding the image from the explorer.

Once you are satisfied with all the settings, click on Start



Using shapes

to apply the watermark to the selected images. Many icon files you open will have multiple versions for different resolutions.

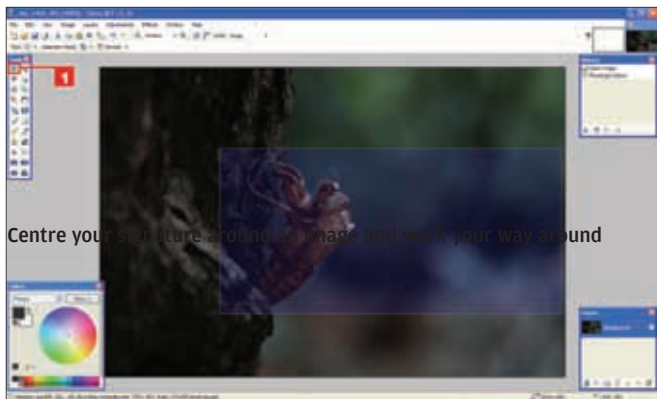


Adding text and text effects

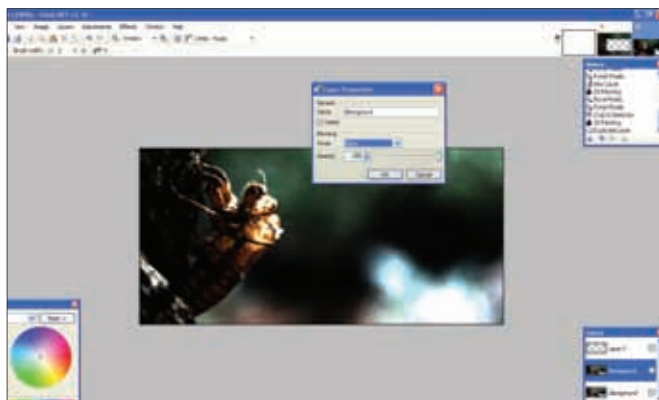
This is done so that even at different resolutions, the icon renders correctly. You can either edit each one of these images, or edit only the version that is used by your filesystem.

2.5 Making a display picture or forum signature

Making a display picture or a forum signature requires advanced image editing as seen in photoshop. Paint.net is a free program which is easy to use, and works with



Centre your signature around an image and work your way around



layers. Imagine a stack of images, with different areas of transparency, which is the basic idea when it comes to working with layers.

A forum signature will be a long bar, whereas a display picture will be a squarish image. The methods for creating

these are similar. You will need to crop the image, add layers, effects and text to the image. The same approach can be used to make any other kind of personal graphics, such as a blog header or image macros.

To crop an image, use the rectangular selection tool (1) and select the area of the image that you want to use. Next, cut the portion of the image and create a new file. Paint.net will automatically use image dimensions according to the area cropped. Alternatively, once the selection is made, you can use [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [X] or Image > Crop to Selection for the same result. You now have the base image. You might want to modify the base image, and adjust the image properties.

Levels correct the balance of the shadows and highlights in an image. This operation might make the image grainier, but as these images are meant to be small, the change will not be very apparent. Go to Adjustments > Levels and slide the Output histogram slider upwards or downwards till you have a better looking image. Adjustments > Brightness / Contrast is another great setting to play around with. Try high contrast and low contrast variations, till you arrive at a base image that you like.

Now, you may or may not want to add effects to the image. These effects will dramatically change the look of the image. Go to Effects > Artistic > Oil-Painting, which is just one of the many effects or filters you can apply to the image. Next, duplicate the base layer and go to Layer > Layer Properties. Change the Mode of the blending, and experiment with the transparencies. There are some options in the Layer blending menu that is not available in Photoshop. We liked the way the “glow” blending looked, so we used that. Alternatively, you can add another image to the layer, and blend it in to the first layer.

Next we need some effects and artwork around the image. Go to Layer > Add new layer. Select vector shapes or other graphics that you might like. We will use the fractal engine to create some fractals and overlay it on the image. Go to Effects > Render > Mandelbrot Fractal. Change the settings till you get a fractal that

you like. Alternatively, you can use the Julia Fractal as well.

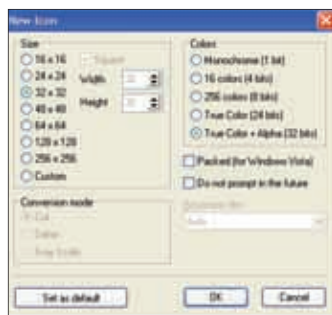
Change the blending options till you have a smooth image. We used the “overlay” option. Next, you might like to add shapes to the image as part of the signature. There are a number of shapes to choose from. We used rectangles, filled with colour. Once you choose a rectangle from the tools menu, make sure to select the right option in the context menu that appears below the menu bar.

Next, use the text tool to add a string of text to the image. This can be useful for image macros, comments, watermarks or forum signatures. Once the text is added, you can use the text as a layer without rasterizing it. You can add effects such as blur directly onto the text.

These steps should give you a fair idea to start image editing on the software. Explore a bit, and you’ll find many more possibilities.

2.6 Making an icon

Sib Icon Editor is a freeware for creating, managing and modifying icons. The first time you start the software, Sib Icon Editor will prompt for file associations. The next prompt on startup is a list of program capabilities. These are Create a new icon, Create a new icon from image file, Open an existing icon file, Find icons in a folder and Extract all icons from the computer.



Text Blur

Click on create a new icon file. Choose the size and colours as per your preferences. The default value of 32x32 and True Color should be good for most operating systems.

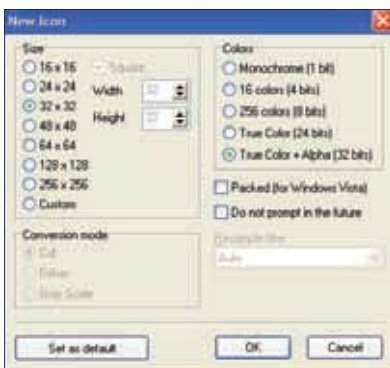
Click on OK. You can start editing right away. The toolbox is located on the left-hand side. The shapes, curves, lines and fill tools can be used to create the icons. The pixels are blown

up in the work area so you have the minutest control over the icons you create. The bottom right corner of the work area has a preview of the icon, which is the real size of the icon. If you want, you can zoom in and out of the work area as per your preferences.

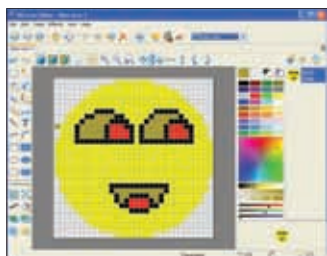
Unfortunately, there is now way to add reflections, but the Effects menu has some effects that can be applied to the image. This includes drop shadow, blurs, and the regular image parameter adjustment options such as hue / saturation and brightness / contrast.

However, you can create an image in a graphic program such as Paint.net and use the image file to create an icon. Once the image is created, start up Sib Icon Editor, and select create a new icon from an image file. Then select the image file, select the dimensions, and the image will be saved in a .ico format. You will have the ability to further edit the icon within Sib Icon Editor.

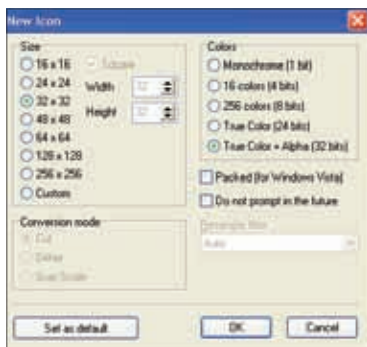
Selecting Extract all icons from My Computer on startup will search the computer for icon files, and create



New icon



Editor



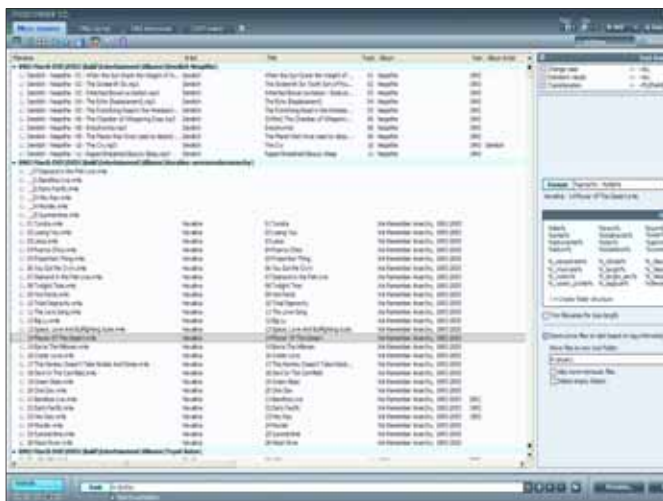
Icon size selection

a library. This library can be saved, so that you don't have to repeat the search again the next time you start up. This search takes some time, after which all the icons will show up in icon editor. Select any one of the icons that show up, and click on Edit icon. This will edit the icon directly in its location, and save it. This is useful for changing the system icons, or default icons of your software to customise the way your software icons look, or to apply a particular theme to non-system software as well.

Organisation

3.1 Managing MP3 tags

A typical MP3 folder is typically badly organised. Because of the different sources of the tracks, the naming conventions used, and the tags used are going to be different, and in different degrees of completion. Navigating to the track you

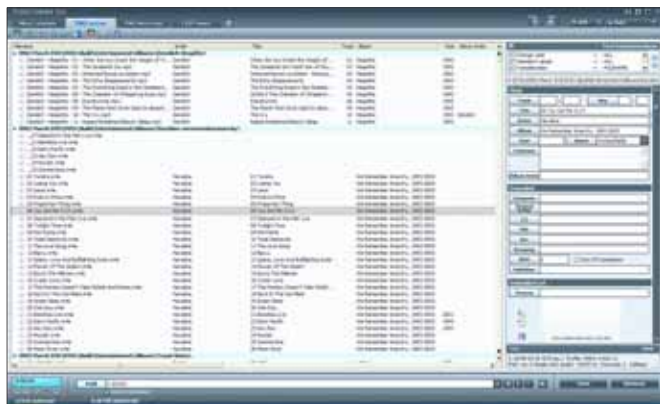


The Music Renamer Window

want in explorer, as well as the display of track information in media players and pmps are going to be affected by this. Changing the track information is possible on almost every media player, but is a labourious process. Renaming all the tracks is also a tedious process. Tagscanner is a great freeware that simplifies these operations, and allows users to change the tag information depending on the file name and change the file name based on the tag information.

There are four top level tabs in Tagscanner. These are Music Renamer, TAG Editor, TAG processor and LIST maker.

The Music renamer draws information from the tags, and renames the associated tracks accordingly. Users can choose the preferred naming convention using the Format field. The Format field uses placeholders to draw information from the tags. Each tag has a corresponding placeholder. For example,

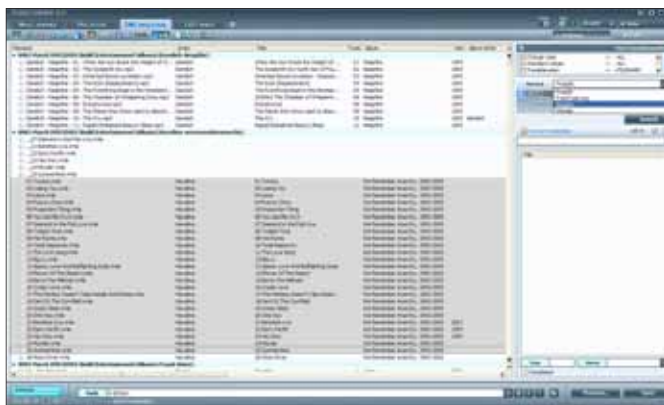


The TAG Editor Window

the placeholder for artist is %artist%. Common placeholders include %album%, %title%, %track% and %year%. The backslash (\) creates a directory structure. Using the format %artist%\\(%year%)-%Album%\\%track%-%title% will first place all songs of the a single artist in a folder by the name of the artist, then create folders for every album released by the artist, with the year of release appended to the name of the album, and place the tracks within these folders, sorted by track number and name.

Once you have specified the format, you can have a look at how the files will be renamed with the preview button. If you are satisfied with the results, click on Rename. Note that you cannot undo this step. On the top right corner, there are some options available to rename a few files. These are files with tags that are not required, or uppercase and lowercase errors. Check options in the list for the kinds of errors you want to fix before clicking on Rename.

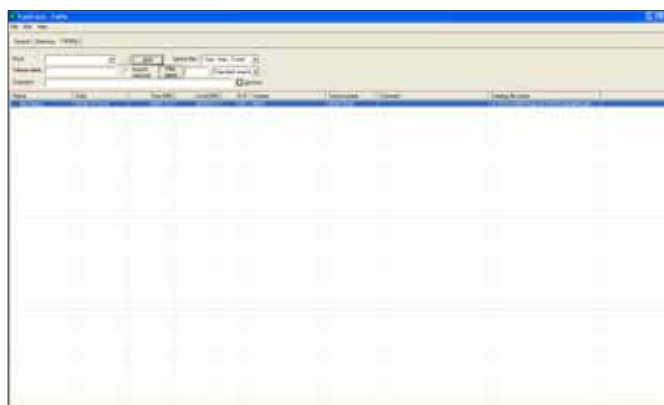
The TAG Editor allows you to change the tags on files one



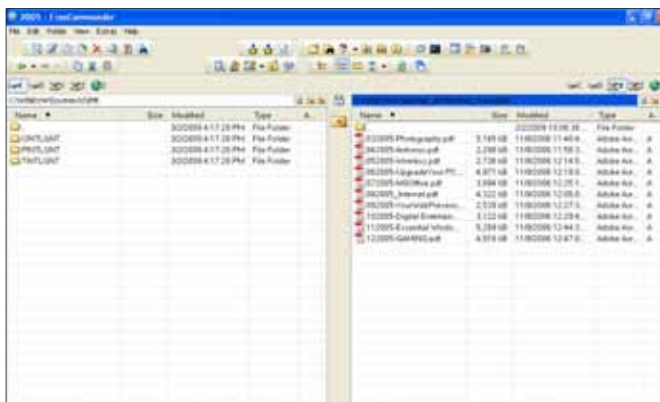
The TAG Processor Window

by one. When you select a single file, the existing tag information shows up in the right. Place the cursor in any of the incomplete fields, and edit the tags.

The TAG Processor is where all the magic of TagScanner is located. The TAG processor uses a number of approaches to quickly and efficiently fill in missing tag information. The first approach is to use online databases to fill in the missing tag information. Select the songs, select a database and click on Save. The databases available include FreeDB, discogs and

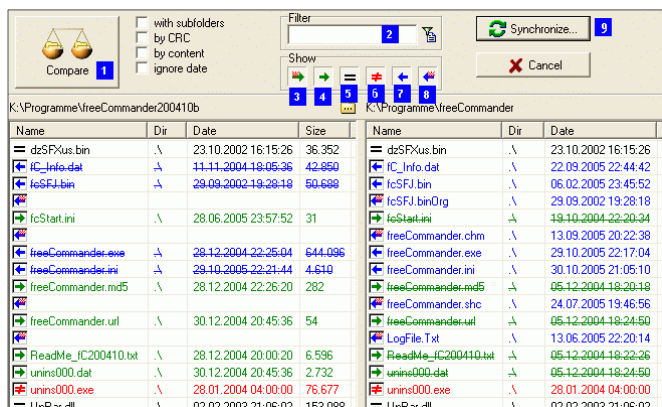


Adding a volume to Cathy



The split pane view of FreeCommander

TrackType.org. The second approach is using the filename itself to generate the tag information. Parts of the filename can be interpreted using placeholders again. These placeholders are similar to the ones used to name the files, and work in reverse. If tracks in a folder are named something like “Tryad-listen.mp3”, then using the placeholder %artist%->%track% will interpret “Tryad” as the artist and “listen” as the track name. You can choose to leave existing values, update them or overwrite them. Updating the existing values is the best choice.



Synchronising two folders

The list maker is a simple function to save all the songs in your database in a list. This can be posted on the internet or e-mailed to friends to compare or share music (doing this with copyrighted tracks is an offense).

3.2 Managing data on removable media

Cathy is a freeware (technically, postcardware) software that is very popular for keeping track of data on various CDs, DVDs



Securely formatting a drive

and other removable media. Cathy is a really small program (<100 KB), and runs on extraction, so is a portable software. On starting up, go to Catalogue, select a root directory, and click on Add. In the label field, change the label to the label on the disk or removable media. This is used to identify the particular location of a file when searching for files later. You can use this method to add in the contents of all the files in all the CDs, DVDs, and removable media that you own. Cathy saves a copy of the catalogued files on the filesystem.

Once you have catalogued all the media, click on the field next to "Pattern" in the Search tab, and enter the name or part of a filename. You can use wildcard characters, but a wildcard is added after and before the search string by default. When you search, a list of files, the location, and the label of the

disk is thrown up. You can identify where a particular file is located by comparing the name indexed as the label within Cathy, to the label on the removable or portable media.

3.3 Using an alternative File Manager

Free Commander 2009 is a great alternative to Windows Explorer. There are portable versions you can install on your flash drive. The Windows version comes as a zip package as



Changing file properties

well as an msi installation. The first thing you will notice in FreeCommander is the split panel window. The right and left panels both act as Explorer windows, and you can go to any part of the filesystem in either of the views. Just above each panel, there are a series of tabs labelled with the drives. This tab interface allows you to surf between drives easily and quickly. Each tab retains the state of the last visit. So, if you go to the D:\folder1\abc and tab to E:\xyz, and then tab back to D:\, the view will return to D:\folder1\abc. The states are preserved for both the panels. This makes operations like relocating files a very easy task.

Go to Folder>Size of Folders, or use the shortcut key [Alt]+[F9] and the folder sizes will be visible. This is an incredibly useful feature. If you have two identical folders, on



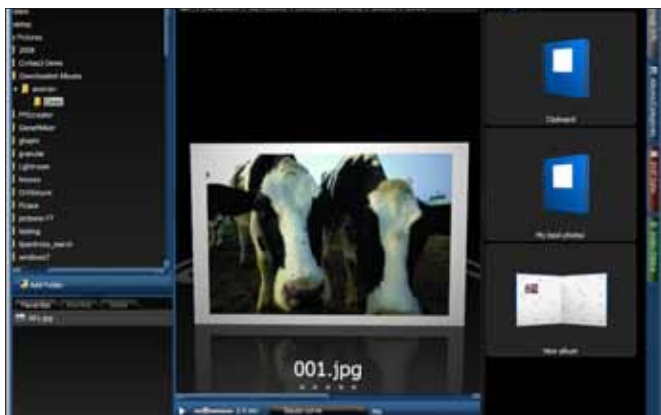
Use Pictomio to solve all your photo management needs

say a backup drive or a USB drive, and the hard drive, then comparing the two versions of the folders is a breeze in FreeCommander. Navigate to the folders in the two panels,



The Carrousel feature in Pictomio to scroll through your photos

and then go to Folder>Synchronize, or use the shortcut keys [Alt]+[S]. This will automatically copy files missing from one folder to the other, and will work for sub folders as well. If you don't want to synchronize, but want to compare two folders,



Create Albums of events such as a family trip

just go to Folder>Compare.

FreeCommander can be used to securely delete data from the Hard Disk. When you delete the file, and remove it from the recycle bin, the link to the file is removed from the partition table. However, the file remains on the drive, and can be recovered using some tools. Formatting a hard drive will not take care of this issue. Extensive usage of the Hard Drive will eventually remove the information, but FreeCommander allows you to securely delete information. Select a file or folder, go to File>Wipe. Now increase or decrease the number of overwrite runs. What happens at each overwrite run, is the portion of the drive containing the data is overwritten with garbage information. The higher number of over write runs you choose, the lower the chances of recovery, but the longer the operation will take.

Another important feature in FreeCommander is the batch renamer. This allows you to rename folders and files in batches, simplifying a long and tedious process. Just select the files, go to File>Multi Rename. This allows you to enter placeholders for renaming the file, which follows a specified pattern. The same method can be used to rename batches of folders as well.

Another useful feature in FreeCommander is the ability to change the the attributes of the file. This means the date and

timestamps associated with any file or folder can be changed. Check Set Attributes, and change the attributes. Check Set Timestamp, and you are free to enter any date for the selected file or folder, even in the future.

Other features for managing and transporting files include direct access to most types of archives (the .zip format is an unfortunate exception, FreeCommander does not handle the format) and the ability to create and check md5 checksums to check if a file has been copied properly from the Internet or from one drive to another. Go to File>Create MD5 Checksum for creating a MD5 checksum, once one is computed, save it. After copying the file, generate the MD5 Checksum again, and compare the two versions. If they are the same, the file has copied correctly. This measure is for very large files and archives. FreeCommander also allows you to split large files into smaller pieces. Go to File>Split. A batch file along with sections will be created. Running the batch file will bring the the sections of the file back together. You can optionally create a .exe file that will bring the files together. You can choose the number of files to split up a file into, or alternatively, specify a maximum size for a file.

3.4 Photo Management

Photos are one of the best ways to capture memories when on holidays and trips with friends and families. Sure taking the photos is an easy task, but managing them, that's where most of the time gets consumed. Windows only allows you to create basic folders, but how many folders can one have. Pictomio is an application that gives you a much better way of categorising and arranging your photos, so you can get quick access to them when needed.

To start off you can install Pictomio from the Digit DVD. Once installed, you will notice that the interface of Pictomio looks nice and has many options. On the right of the window is where you can navigate through your folders and also create folders with just a click of a button.

If you mouse over any of the folder you will be greeted with a very nice animation of the items within the folder.

Once you have a folder open, you can view the images

in different styles. By default you would be viewing it as Thumbnails. Pictomio has other options such as Film Strip, Single Image and Carrousel. Film Strip and Single Images are pretty straight forward, but photos in Carrousel mode look really spectacular as it is very similar to something that you would see on a Mac OS.

You can select the maximise button at any point which will maximise the image in whichever form you are viewing it. Maximise basically gets rid of the left navigation options and gives you just the photos.

Pictomio has various ways to arrange photos. The broader categories include creating Albums and Categories. With Albums, you can cut or copy and paste the photos you want in a separate album or in the preset albums which include Clipboard and My Best Photos. These Albums actually have the animation of a book opening and your photos being stuck inside them. To access the Albums you need to mouse over the Albums/Categories tab located on the right of the Pictomio window. To prevent this menu from collapsing you will need to click on the small pin icon located on the top right of the Album/Category menu which will stop the menu from collapsing.

The Categories option is located next to the Albums tab. The Categories menu looks like large plastic trays where you can dump photos into. The difference between Albums and Categories is that with Categories you get to arrange your photos according to what they represent (Art, Animals, Friends, etc), whereas with Albums it could be arranged to an activity on a particular date.

At some point you might want to categorise just a single one of your friends, or a particular plant that you want to see bloom. So for this you could just take a photo and mark it in a single colour. Then the corresponding photos taken can be marked in the same colour. When you want to look out for all those photos you can just filter your photos according to the colour you have marked it with. To mark it with a particular colour there will be a small colour button on the top right corner of every image. Just click that button and select the colour you want to mark the photo with.

Now to sort all your marked photos you can click on

the Sort by option located on the upper right corner of the Pictomio window. Not only can you sort by colour, but you can also sort by Name, Date, File Size and Rating.

To add a rating you can directly select a star rating which is located towards the bottom, below the photos.

Pictomio also allows you to upload your photos to image hosting sites such as Picasa, Photobucket, locr, facebook, flickr and ImageShack where you can share all your photos with your friends and family.

Graphics

4.1 Create a 3d Model

There are a bunch of free 3D modelling tools out there, including Blender and Wings 3D. However, if you are a beginner, these software are a little complicated to start with. A much easier option, that gives dramatic results to beginners is Bryce 3D. Bryce was owned by Corel at one point of time, and was a commercial software. The software was brought over by DAZ Studios, and has been freeware ever since. You will have to register the software. To do this, go to www.daz3d.com.

When starting with 3D modelling, don't aim for very complicated models. Start with something simple such as a watch or a building. Even going through with a simple object can be demanding in terms of time, so be prepared to spend a lot of time on your model. Once you open up Bryce, you will be presented with a very simple but powerful interface. By default, the scene will contain a camera, a ground and a default setting for the sky. Before we start modeling, its a good idea to familiarise oneself with the interface.

The view changer (1) selects the views of the scene. This is the perspective with which a user can model software. There are six directional views available, a director view, and a camera view. The directional views can be useful to carefully align elements of a model together. The controls for shifting the view (2) shifts the point of view along the three axes. These should be used only in the camera and the director modes. The banking and field of view controls (3) are used for tilting the scene, or zooming in and out of the object or elements being modelled. The trackball (4) allows for free movement around the scene. The trackball will be repeatedly used while modelling to change the point of view by slight degrees for different perspectives on the model. The rendering menu (5) will be used for the final output image after the model is ready, and offers a number of options. You can enable or disable textures, change the resolution of the image, render a quick preview or change

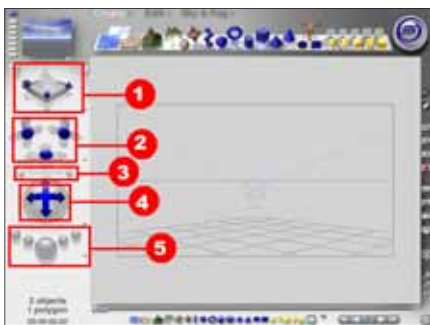
the degree of anti-aliasing used for rendering.

The top bar has a number of drawing objects, which will be used for modelling. There are sky, ground and water controls here, which can be created both as surfaces and as volume.

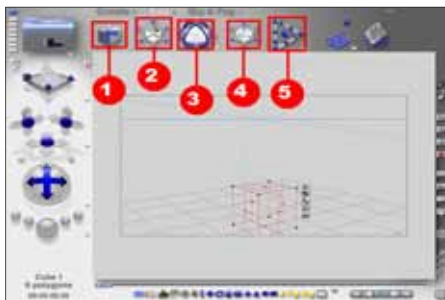
Terrains, rocks, trees and other ground elements are represented here. The objects include cylinders, pyramids, cubes and tori. A selection of lights for the scene are also available. The Create menu has a number of presets, and studying these are useful. For this scene, we will be rendering a table with a cup on top of it.

Create a cube first. The cube will be placed in the centre of the scene. Head over to the edit menu.

The edit menu has a number of options for changing various aspects of an object. The materials menu (1) changes the textures that are applied to the object. The resize control (2) changes the size of the image along any one of the three axes or all three. The rotate control (3) rotates the objects around the three axes. The reposition control (4) moves the object along the three axes. The align controls (5) aligns two or more selected objects along every possible combination of the three axes. For now, resize



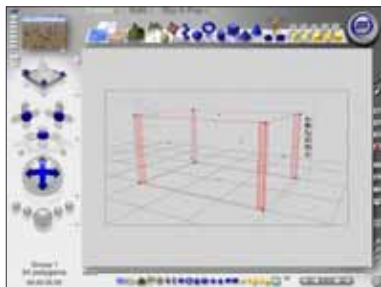
The Bryce View Controls



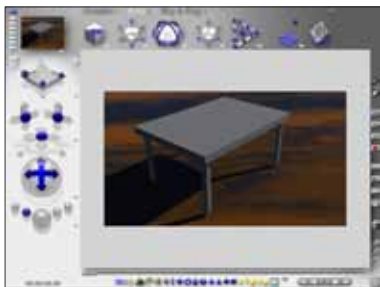
The Bryce Object Manipulation Controls

the cube and drag the size control, making one of the four legs of the table. Now, copy paste the elongated cube and

move it along either the X or Z axes to make the second leg of the table. You can use the Ctrl + C and Ctrl + V shortcut keys for doing this. Next, select both the “legs” of the table, copy paste them, and move them along X or Z axes to make the other two legs of the table. Now select all the objects together, a small menu will appear, select G. This groups the objects together, and you can manipulate them as a whole. This means that resizing and moving operations will treat all the four table legs as one object. At this point, you should have something like this.



Making the legs of the table

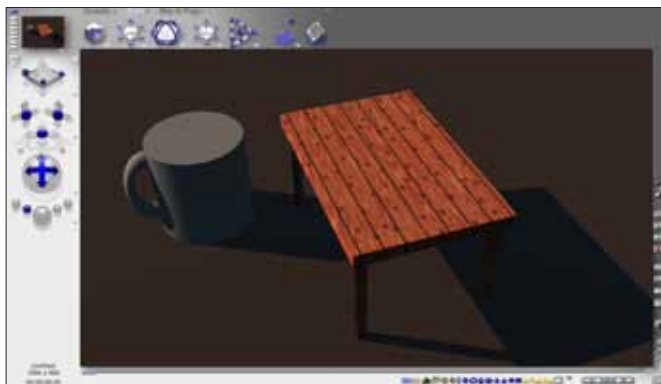


Rendering a test image



Applying textures

Create another cube for the surface of the table. This should appear all around one of the table legs. Resize this cube to make it flat, and stretch it till it covers all the four legs. Then, select the table legs, as well as the surface, and use the align tool to align the surface. First, use the Y top alignment, this will align the top surface of the legs with the surface. Then use the X and Z centre aligns, and the surface should be perfectly aligned with the legs. Increase the height of the surface just a little



Modelling the cup

bit at this point of time, to ensure that the legs don't peek out of the top. Select the surfaces and the legs, then click on G to group them together. This will make your table behave like a single unit. You can do a test render now, to have a look at the table. The render should look something like this.

The ground is using a very odd texture. At the same time, the table is a little above the ground and not touching it. The table itself has no texture. To change the texture of the ground, select the ground and click on M. This will bring up the Materials window.

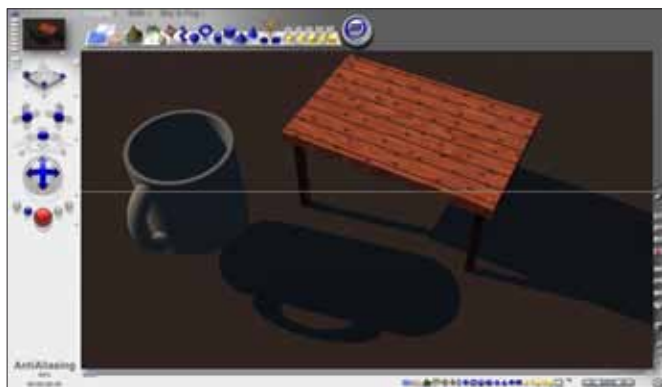
The Wood Plank preset texture sounds good enough. You can import your own textures, or choose something else. There are a lot of preset textures which you can use. Next, select the table, and click on the down arrow to make the table "fall" to the floor. Now, select the table, click M again, and apply a texture to the table. Choose a wood texture. If the wood texture is clashing with the texture of the floor, change the floor texture.

The next step will be to design a cup. The methods used can be applied to make really elaborate and detailed models in Bryce. Bryce uses what are called Boolean Objects to shape 3D models. Bryce has no functionality to warp, bend, twist or transform objects, so any kind of modeling on Bryce relies heavily on Boolean Objects. Boolean Objects use two kinds of 3D objects merged together – "positive" objects are rendered, and "negative" objects are cut away from the positive objects.

Create > Boolean Objects shows a number of preset Boolean Objects, have a look at them and you'll get some idea of the range of possibilities.

To create the cup, first create a cylinder. Then, create a torus. Align it to the cylinder on one of the horizontal axes and flatten the torus to create the handle of the cup. Select the torus, then click on E to change the radius of the torus. This changes how thick or thin the torus is. Adjust this till you have a handle for the cup. Then, group the two objects together.

Notice that the interior of the cup is solid. This is where the boolean operations come in. Make another cylinder, and place it at the centre of the solid cylinder. You will have to ungroup the torus and the cylinder to do this accurately.



Using Boolean Objects

Make the second cylinder slightly smaller than the first. Now you'll have an outer cylinder and an inner cylinder. Re-align the outer cylinder and the torus. Now, group the torus and the outer cylinder together. Select the outer cylinder and the torus, and click on A. This should open up the object attributes window. Change the object behaviour to Positive. Now select the inner cylinder, and change the object behaviour to Negative. Group the outer and inner cylinders together, and you should have a cup.

For boolean operations to work properly, you'll have to



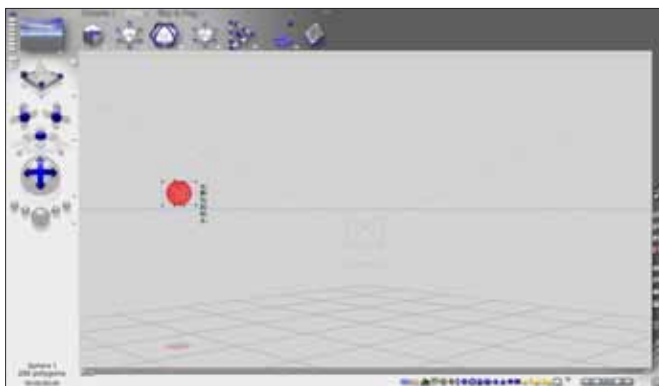
Rendering the image with light and textures

ensure that every component of the positive object group, that is the torus and the outer cylinder have to behave as positive objects even in the ungrouped state.

Now, you can apply a preset texture to the cup, or you can create your own texture. Use a graphic editing program to create a texture, or use any image that you want. We'll be using the Digit logo. If you are using a photograph of people, or a logo, make sure to leave a lot of empty space around the logo for the texture to wrap around the object. Select the cup, click on "M", enter the materials lab. On the top right corner, click on P, which changes the texture from a procedural texture to an image texture. Then click on Texture Source Editor, and select the image from the file system. The texture should be applied to the object now. Since the scene is a little dark, we'll be adding in a light source. Click on any of the yellow objects in the object menu to add a light. The spherical light works best for small scenes. Click on E and reduce the intensity of the light. Now, position the light over the cup, and render the image. Note that adding light sources to a scene increases the time taken to render drastically.

4.2 Animate a 3D scene

We'll be using Bryce 5 to animate a scene. When animating 3D scenes, it makes sense to start simple. We'll be showing how to make a bouncing ball 3D animation, and then show

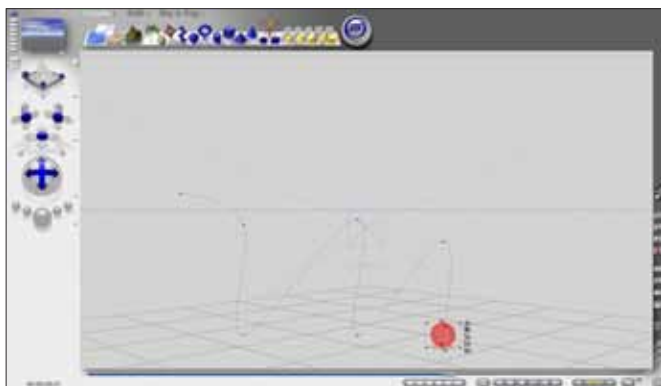


Creating the ball

some of the techniques in Bryce using basic objects that can be applied to models.

Along the bottom of the scene screen, there is a time slider. Dragging the time slider, which is known as “scrubbing” creates the fourth dimension in the 3D scene. Create a sphere for the ball. Make it smaller, so that you have plenty of room to manipulate within the scene.

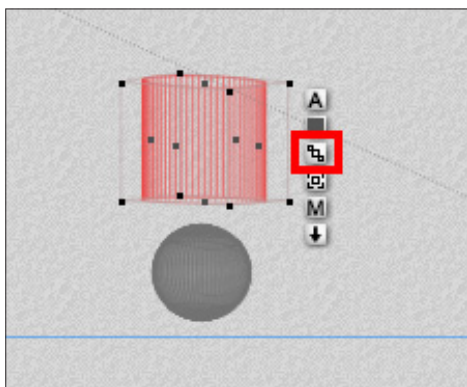
Now, scrub the time slider, and select and move the ball. A blue line representing the path of the ball should appear, which is known as a “path”. This is a visual representation of the path of the ball. on the bottom right of the screen, the



Applying a path to the ball

time / selection toggle will be located. Click on this to bring up the animation menu. Now, you can click on play, to have a look at your simple animation. You can create the path of the bouncing ball by repeating this process over the bounces. Every time you want to make the ball touch the ground, scrub the time line, click on the sphere and then click on the down arrow icon.

Notice that the path automatically curves to make the movement of the ball smooth. Next, we'll be linking another object to the ball. Linking an object to another, makes the linked object follow the "parent" object along the animated path. However, the linked object can be animated independently of the parent object, without affecting the parent object. This is useful for animating parts of a model while keeping the model together, the wings of a plane or the limbs of a character are good examples. Create an object, select the object, and click on the "link" icon.

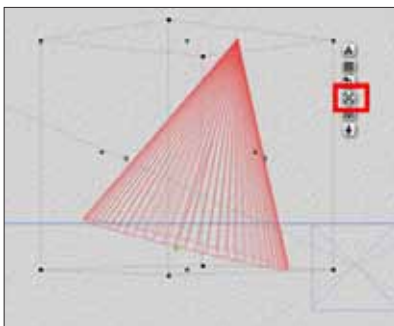


Linking a cylinder to the ball

Next, drag the mouse to the parent object. The parent object should turn blue. Now, the linked object will follow the path of the parent object. A path for the linked object will not appear unless you animate the linked object too. Now, click on the linked object, and animate it along the time line. You'll notice that a path appears for the linked object, and the path of the linked object itself moves along with the parent object.

Another important feature in Bryce is the tracking function. A tracking function makes an object "follow" the movement of another object with one face

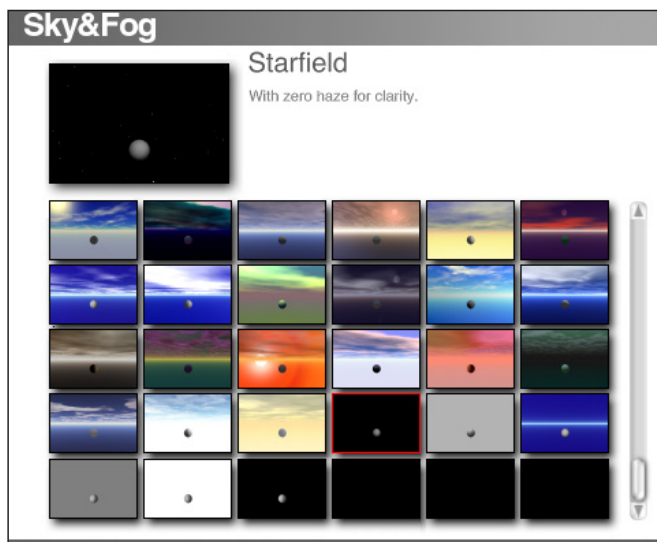
of the object. The object does not move with the tracked object, unless it is also linked to the object. This is useful for lights to track an object, or for say, sunflowers following the movement of the sun. Create an object, select it, and click on the “track” icon to make it follow another object.



Tracking the ball

Tracking is most useful for making the camera follow an object. The camera itself can be animated, which moves with the scene. The camera is present as default in all Bryce scenes.

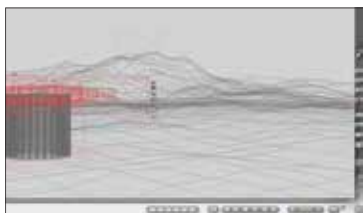
We'll now be using these techniques to create an ani-



Applying the starfield environment

mation of a spaceship landing on a pad, with the camera and tracking the spaceship. Create a new scene. Next, click on the arrow next to the Sky and Fog menu, and select the starfield background. You can also create alien skies and the like, but a starfield keeps things simple for now.

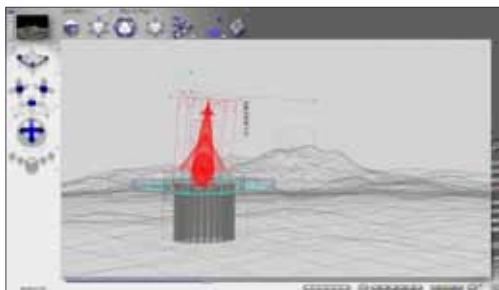
Next, click on the mountain icon in the create menu, to create a randomly generated terrain. This gives some kind of feature to the ground, which would have otherwise been flat. Flatten the terrain a bit, to make it look less like a mountain. Then, go to the create menu, and use a column, and a gear to create the landing pad.



Making a landing pad

Apply a suitable texture to the pad. Now, use the spaceship from the Create > Boolean Objects menu. Apply a suitable texture to the spaceship as well. You can experiment with a number of approaches when it comes to animating the spaceship. It's a good idea to save now, before you animate the file. This ensures that you have something to start over with, in case something goes wrong with the animation. Now, scrub the time line, and change the position of the spaceship. You can make it land vertically, or horizontally according to your preference.

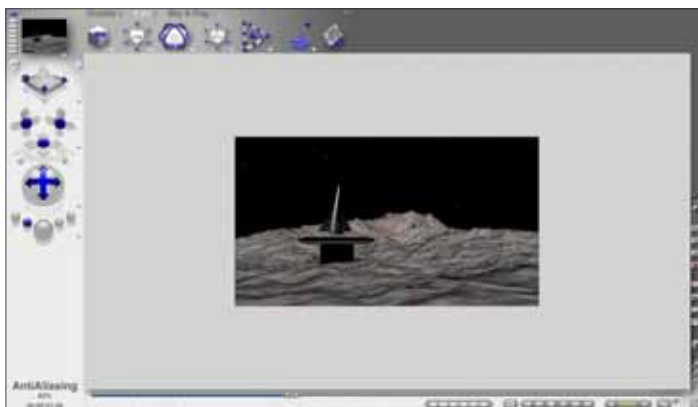
Now, we will work with the camera. So far, you have been working from



Animating the spaceship

the director's point of view. Click on the camera, and track the spaceship with it. Next, click on the view control, and change the view to the camera. Go to the beginning of the time line, and change the viewpoint to the camera view. Then change the initial camera view, and then go back to the director view. Track the camera to the spaceship. Your animation is now ready.

Make a couple of test runs, and you'll have to render the animation several times over. The flat ground beyond the terrain may show up, the spaceship may not move smoothly.



The final render

Spend some time with the software, and you'll start getting rewarding results.

To output the final animation, go to **File > Render animation**. Don't select large dimensions for the video, as this will take up the rendering time considerably. Instead of animating the entire sequence in one go, animate parts, experiment with camera angles, and then pull the animations together in a video editing software. 600x480 should be enough for sharing on the web. Also, don't overuse lights, liquid and atmospheric effects. Once all the objects in a scene are in place, save the file before animating them. After animating everything in a scene, save the file before animating the camera. These simple steps will prove more productive in the long run.

4.3 Capturing screen activity

Capturing the screen activity can be very useful for demonstrating software, or for making gaming videos. CamStudio is a freeware that allows users to capture the on-screen activity. The memory footprint of the software is very low, so the screen activity will not be hampered by the software. There are a number of advanced features that CamStudio has, to help



CamStudio interface

accentuate screen activity. Install CamStudio, then start it up. Go to **Region > Full Screen**, then click on the **Record** button to start recording right away. The software is minimised to the system tray. To stop recording, right-click on the CamStudio icon in the system tray, and select **stop**.

Apart from capturing the entire screen, you can choose to capture only a part of the screen. Go to **Region > Region**. Now, when you click on **record**, you will have to select the



Selecting a region

area of the screen you want to record. This feature is useful when you want to record the screen without the start bar or capture a video playing on the screen. Another option is to fix the portion of the screen being recorded using the co-ordinates in terms of pixels.

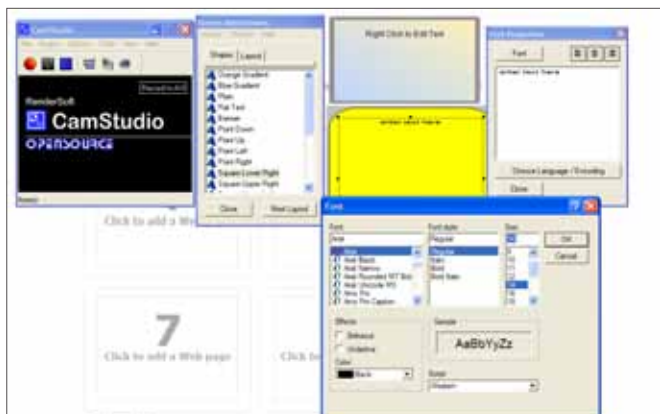
Once a region is set, you can make CamStudio follow the cursor. Instead of recording the whole screen, this approach will highlight the actual activity on the screen. Go to **Options > Enable Autopan**. Now the region of recording will follow the cursor around the screen. When the region hits one of the corners of the screen however, the camera will stop at the edge, and only the cursor will move.

Depending on the type of screen activity you are capturing, you may or may not want the cursor to show up in the recording. By default, the cursor does show up in the recording, but this can be changed. You can also set CamStudio to record the cursor, add flashes to the cursor when some activity such as a click or a right-click occurs, and even change the system cursor to another cursor of your choice. Go to Options > Cursor options and change the settings as per your preferences.

Screen annotations are useful for adding text boxes on the screen. Any kind of vector shape can be used as a speech bubble, with a really elaborate combination of shapes being possible. If you are not going to edit the video after capture, but want to include a logo, annotations can be used for the purpose. Go to Tools > Screen annotations, and add shapes and text. You can change the font and the text, click and drag the annotations to any part of the screen, and change the text of the annotations while recording. You can also use Tools > Video annotations to add a video window from a web cam to the



Tracking the cursor



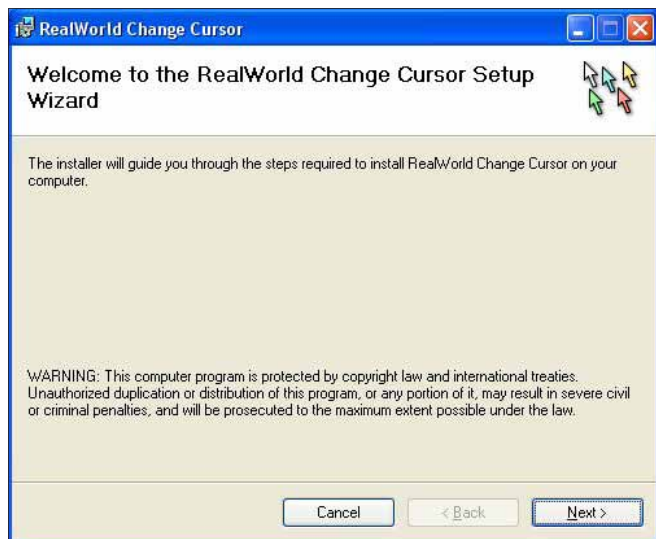
Adding annotations to the capture

screen while capturing, so you can talk to the audience while capturing the screen.

The SWF producer converts the avi video into a SWF file that is ideal for distribution over the internet. You can use this functionality to convert any AVI file into an SWF file. You can also record the screen natively in the SWF format, but this is not recommended, as it is always helpful to have a high-res version of the screen activity on your computer.

Desktop Enhancements

Many share the opinion that in the long run Windows XP and Vista desktops get boring. You can change the wallpaper of your desktop, but what if you want more of a change? With the software we are going to share with you, personalising your desktop would be a piece of cake.



Complete the installation process

5.1 Change your mouse cursor

Changing the look of the windows cursors is one of the things that we normally do when we try to personalise the desktop. But don't you get irritated when you have to keep opening Control Panel > Mouse > Pointers and then browsing for the cursors you want to use. Well with the RW Change Cursor software, customising cursors will not be as time con-

suming or strenuous as it used to be.

Before we start installing the software, you need to download some cursors. You can visit www.photricity.com to get some really funny cursors.

Next download and install RW Change Cursor. Now all you need to do is right-click an ANI or a CUR file and you will see the change cursor option. Just select the appropriate item from the context menu and your cursor will switch within a matter of seconds.

5.2 Add a Sidebar to your Desktop

If you use Windows XP and thought that were left out because they did not have a sidebar don't need to worry about that anymore. All you have to do to install a sidebar on your



The Google Sidebar looks very similar to the Vista Sidebar

desktop is to download the Google Desktop. You can get it at desktop.google.com

Once installed, the default sidebar will have a clock, news, switching images of your Pictures folder. You also have scratch pad, which will allow you to set small notes and an option to set

You can also install this sidebar in Vista. You would want to disable the already present Windows Sidebar though. Just right-click the Sidebar icon on your system tray and select close sidebar. Also uncheck the option to display on startup and your done. You now will be able to customise the Google Sidebar

Next step in modifying your desktop is to get hooked up with some widgets. If you haven't downloaded the Google Desktop then you should do so as you can get widgets from Google,



Widgets to tell the time, play games and even have a virtual plant

only difference is that Google calls these ‘Gadgets’. You can download these gadgets from the plugins section of **desktop.google.com**.

If you don't trust Google, then you could also get your widgets from Yahoo! Just go to widgets.yahoo.com and download the widgets you want for your desktop.

do is right-click that icon and go to Dock Item Properties. Here you can change what you want to be displayed. For example, we have replaced Opera with Firefox and have left the same icon for the internet browser button.



Changing the buttons on the dock bar

You can also download icon sets and change the look of the icons. For this, you will need to get a set of icons. This dock supports PNG format for icons. Once you have downloaded the icons, enter Dock Item Properties once again and then click on Change Icon. The preset icons will be displayed at first, but then you can also click on the Browse button located towards the bottom of the window. Click that and locate the icon that you have downloaded and want to use.

5.5 Mac Style Windows

The obsession with making your desktop look and feel like a Mac does not stop only at the dock bar. We can go further with it. The software that we are talking about is called DEXposE2. This application is a clone of the Expose feature present in Mac OS and with it you can have the look of windows floating around giving you a cyclic preview in Windows.



Changing the icon images of the dockbar

You can download DExposE2 from <http://devrexster.googlepages.com/dexpose2>. There is no installation process involved. Just extract the RAR file to a folder. Once extracted, open the folder and double-click the DExposE2 icon. This launches



The icon to show that DExposE2 has started

a small icon on the system tray that indicates the program is running.

To use DExposE2, just hit the [F9] key and see how the windows get adjusted. Hit [F9] to return to the window you were working on. You can also select another window once you have hit [F9].

Another similar feature with this is when you hit [F10]. The first screen of DExposE2 remains the same, where you have multiple windows displayed in front of you. But when you use [F10] again, only two windows are displayed.



The arrangements of windows when you press the F9 key

Mac OS also allows you to scroll through the different windows open. Not to worry as that feature is also present in DExposE2. First hit [F9], next use the Page Up and Page Down buttons to scroll through the open windows. This gives more of a magnified view of the open windows.

You can also activate the DExposE2 feature by using the Hotcorner feature. Just drag your mouse over to the lower right-corner of the screen and you will activate the preview windows.

DExposE2 does take up a lot of RAM. This is a known problem as the previews are cached by the RAM. The work around is quite simple and is also present within the software. Right-click on the DExposE2 icon present on the system tray and select Refresh. By doing this, all the cached previews are removed and it brings the memory usage down to 10 MB.

Another interesting thing you can do with DExposE2 is pause it when you are not using the computer. Just right click the icon on the system tray and click on Suspend. The icon changes and now even though the program is running you won't be able to use all the shortcuts. To resume, right click on the icon again and select Resume.

If you want DExposE2 to start during Windows start up, then right click the icon on the system tray and go to



Scroll through the open windows with DExposE2

Preferences. Just put a check on Autostart at booting.

Another very interesting feature present with this application is that it allows you to use the memory of your graphics card instead of your RAM for performing its tasks. For this, you will have to open up the preferences window again by right-clicking the DEXposE2 icon on the system tray and selecting Preferences. Then open the previews quality option. If you have a good graphics card we suggest you put a check on Use video memory rather than the RAM option. If you have integrated Intel graphics this wouldn't really make much of a difference.

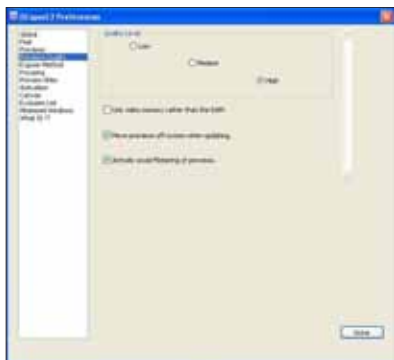
You can also change the method the windows are exposed. You can switch between Slide, Fade and No animation. You can also adjust the slide speed and the way the windows fade. To do this go



Suspend and Refresh buttons to help your needs



Global Settings for DEXpose2



Adjust the quality of DEXpose2

to the Preferences and then select the Expose Method option from the list on the left.

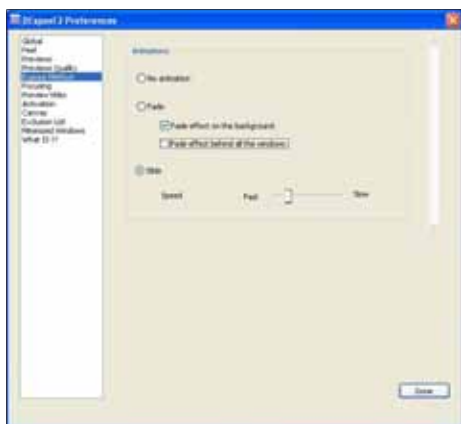
You can also customise shortcut keys and define the mouse hotspots for exposing the windows. This option is located in the Activation section of the Preferences window.

5.6 Adding Aero 3D effect to XP

This is real good news for all of those who thought that the Aero Flip feature that is present in Vista can't be used by those using XP. The software we are talking about is Shock Aero 3D v.097 and this gives your desktop the Aero-like effect that comes with Windows Vista.

After installing and starting the software, a small 'A' icon will be displayed on the system tray that indicates that the feature is on. So now all you have to do is hit the Windows + [Tab] keys and you will get your 3D Aero effect to switch between tabs.

You can also set a custom hotkey if you don't like the default hotkey to use the 3D Aero feature. Right-click on



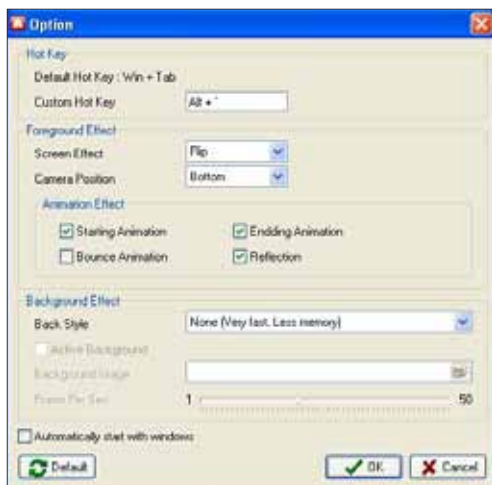
Change the way D'Expose2 displays your windows



The Aero effect

the icon in the system tray and select Options.

Along with that you can also change the effect from Flip and select the other two choices, i.e. Grid and Wave Flip. However, in our opinion the standard Flip is much better.



Customise the Shock Aero 3D options



Making a new Aero effect after customising

If you don't like the standard camera view of the Flip effect you can change it to suit your needs. You can also add some background effects to add to the whole 3D effect. But by adding these effects, more RAM will be utilised which might

cause your system to run slightly slower while using these effects.

You can customise further by adding or removing some of the animation effects that are present and also the increase or decrease the background animation speeds. So if somebody mentions that in Vista you have Aero Flip, well you can tell that person that you can do the same with XP.

5.7 Managing your wallpapers



The CoreDownload Free Wallpaper Changer Options

Having to look at the same screen does get boring, with wallpapers you can atleast have that satisfaction of customising your desktop. But who really has the time to sit and change wallpapers daily. With the CoreDownload Free Wallpaper Changer you will be greeted with a new wallpaper everyday.

First off you can download this application from <http://www.coredownload.com/free-wallpaper-changer/>. Once installed and started, it will immediately change your wallpaper. You will also notice that it has launched a small icon on the system tray. On clicking this icon you get to cycle through the few wallpapers that come with this software.

Right-click the icon on the system tray and go to CoreDownload Free Wallpaper Changer Control Panel. Here you can set the wallpapers that you want to use. You can add or delete a wallpaper you don't want to use. If you don't want the wallpapers to be changed in order, you can also select shuffle wallpapers. There is also a timer that can be set so that your wallpapers can be switched automatically according to the timer.

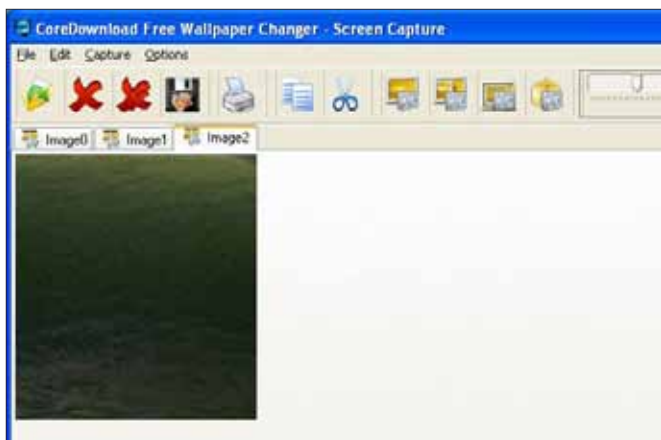
If you don't want a wallpaper you can clear your wallpaper quickly using this application too. Right-click the system tray icon and click on the Clear Wallpaper. You will now have the default clean blue Windows wallpaper.

You can even perform tasks such as Show Display Properties, Hide Desktop Icons and even start the screen saver by selecting the Launch Windows Screen Saver option from the same context menu on right-clicking the icon.

With the Free Wallpaper Changer you can also take screenshots with the Screen Capture option. Not only can you take just a screen shot but you have options such as Desktop, Selected Area, Active Window and Selected Object. Once the screenshot is taken you can even do some slight editing with the captured image such as increasing the size and even cropping the image.

5.8 Displaying Notes and Calendar as part of the Wallpaper

Some of you might not like the idea about floating widgets or gadgets and an extra sidebar to display just a calendar. But at the same time you will want an easy way to set reminders that do not interfere with your desktop setup. For this an easy solution would be to have your calendar and notes be displayed on the wallpaper itself. One such software to help you with this task is Art Plus Wallpaper Calendar Lite 5.0. With this soft-



Edit Captured Images with the inbuilt software

ware you can easily have your calendar and notes embedded onto your wallpaper.

Once downloaded and installed the software interface is



Set the options for Art Plus Wallpaper Calendar Lite 5.0



The way the calendar with look on your dekstop



Choose from different style options to display on your wallpaper

rather easy to understand with options such as Diary, Images, Calendar Style, Options, Special, Help, About and Register.

This particular application allows two types of reminders, Diary and Quick Notes. When it comes to Diary, it basically allows you to make entries on a particular day of the calendar, whereas Quick Notes can be used for random non-date specific reminders. Both of these reminder styles along with the calendar can be used as a wallpaper which makes it very useful.

When you click on the Diary Tab you can enter notes on different dates. These notes stack up on the Diary part of your wallpaper.

The Images tab is where you can select the background image to be displayed with your wallpaper. You cannot add new images as this is the Lite version of the software. You could on the other hand change the order of the images as well as the cycling frequency of these images.

The Calendar Style option is where you can set the layout of your calendar. You can also change the font, font style as well as transparency of the calendar and the other elements – diary & notes. In this option you can also select what you want to display on the wallpaper, either just the calendar, all the three elements or any two. You can also change the colours and select individual fonts for the different days of the weeks.

System Management

6.1 Clean up the system

Cleaning up the system involves maintenance tasks such as deleting temporary files, downloaded internet files, recycle bin, redundant registry entries and other tasks that free up memory and generally keep the system healthy. It can actually be compared to spring cleaning your living environment, thereby your work flow gets streamlined and efficiency increases.

CCleaner (formerly Crap Cleaner) is a freeware system optimisation tool that serves this function. It removes unused and temporary files from your system. This makes Windows run smoother, faster and more in a more efficient manner. The bonus is that you get more hard disk space. The software is able to go inside other applications and clean unnecessary information that the application has stored over time. For instance with web browsers such as IE and Firefox, it can clear cache, history and cookies. Its repertoire has several applications with which it is compatible. CCleaner is also able to clean unused and old entries from the registry. This greatly reduces the startup time since Windows has a smaller registry to go through at startup. There is also an in-built uninstaller.

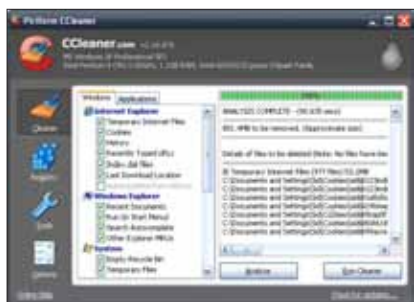
The interface is pretty simple to understand. On the left panel you have icons for the various functions that CCleaner offers viz. Cleaner, Registry, Tools. There is also an options button.

6.1.1 Cleaner

The cleaner function has two tabs. One is for clean up related to Windows and the other is clean up related to applications. By default, there are some options selected in both the tabs. It's best to leave them that way unless you are an advanced user. There are two action buttons available. Analyse and Run Cleaner. When you are on either of the tabs you should click Analyse before actually executing the cleaning process. It is

recommended that you close all other programs before running either.

Once you click analyse, CCleaner will tell you exactly how much space it is going to clean and how (i.e. from which applications). The analysing process can take anywhere between a minute to several minutes depending on the data found.



CCleaner analysis complete

Once you've had a quick glance at the files CCleaner intends to delete, go ahead and click Run Cleaner. The cleaner will finish the job in a minute or two at most.

6.1.2 Registry

This function of the software will check for several registry integrity issues such as ActiveX and class issues, obsolete software, applications etc. Select the issues that you wish to scan and click the "Scan for Issues" button.

All problems found will be ticked by default. Novice users might want to leave it like that and click "Fix selected issues". As a precaution, you can also choose to back up the changes in the registry in the unlikely event something shouldn't have been removed. The application will prompt you to do this once you click the button to fix. Click "Yes" and proceed. You will be prompted to save the old registry entry file. Once you save the file CCleaner will ask you to approve every registry fix. For users who haven't used this software before there will probably be thousands of entries. Approving each is not practically possible, so just click on "Fix all selected issues". Your registry will then be fixed.

In the event that there is a problem with the registry solution that CCleaner provided, you can always restore the registry backup. Simply right-click on the REG file created and select 'Merge'. By default, this file will be

6.2 Format a drive

Formatting a hard drive removes viruses and Trojans, and resolves other storage and hard-to-solve issues. However, ensure that you back up your important data, as the formatting process will wipe out all the data on the drive. The procedure to format the hard drive depends on whether you want to format the secondary hard drive, or the primary hard drive and install an operating system on it. Using third party software, i.e. tools other than the Windows system management tool, you may be able to format only secondary drives. The format which such applications offer is either a low-level format or a permanent erase.

It is important to back up all your data before you proceed. Be sure to back up all important data before engaging in any Formatting operation. Also, the possibility of damage to the hard disk cannot be ruled out. Due the a low-level format is an irreversible procedure, is not recommended to use on a regular basis, but only in extreme cases and as a last resort to recover a disk with problems such as bad sectors. So it goes without saying that it is not recommended to use the low-level format on new disks.

Hard Disk Low Level Format Tool from hddguru.com is one such tool that does what the name suggests: Low level formatting. Low-level formatting is the process of outlining the positions of the tracks and sectors on the hard disk, and writing the control structures that define where the tracks and sectors are. This type of formatting operation defines structures that tell where the data is stored on the disk. If a low level format is done on a disk with data on it already, the data is permanently erased.

On launching the application, it automatically scans the system and detects the available hard disks, which includes external drives. The tool supports IDE / SATA / SCSI, RAID arrays, external USB / Firewire hard disks,



Hard Disk Low Level Format Tool

flash cards, pen drives, and memory sticks.

Select a secondary drive and click continue. You will find three tabs: Device Details, Low-Level Format and SMART. In the Smart

tab you will find several important attributes relating to your disk such as Error rate, spin time and HDA temperature among other details, once you click the Get Smart Attributes Button.

In the low level format tab, you can actually execute the formatting. Click **FORMAT THIS DEVICE**. You will be asked if you are extremely sure. On clicking Yes the software starts to reformat the selected drive, this process takes several minutes.

Once completed, you must create the disk's partitions in order to make it useable. As this is a secondary HDD, it

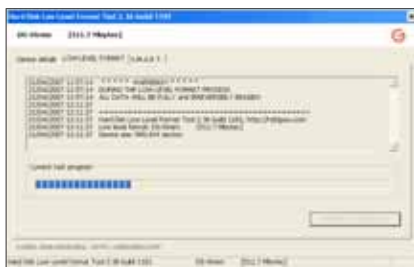
doesn't require an OS, you can use the wizard included in Win XP or Vista.

KillDisk is an application that offers a permanent erase. It performs two functions.

1. Wiping confidential data from unused space on your hard drive. Wiping the logical drive's deleted data does not delete existing files and folders. It processes all unoccupied drive space so that data recovery of previously deleted files



HD LLF tool interface



Formatting in progress



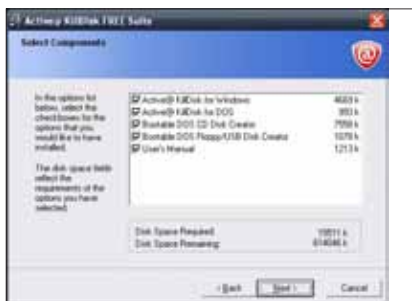
Formatting warning

becomes impossible. Installed applications and existing data are not touched by this process. KillDisk wipes unused data residue from file slack space, unused sectors, and unused space in MFT records or root records. When you erase data with KillDisk for Windows, you destroy data permanently, conforming to US military standards.

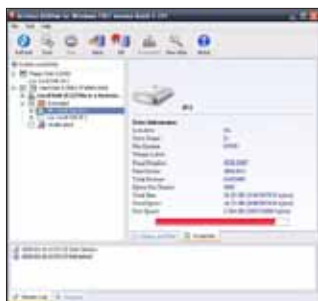
2. Erase data from partitions or from an entire hard disk. This destroys data permanently. If you use KillDisk to erase a disk, to be able to use HDD again you need to. Repartition the hard drive using a standard DOS utility like FDISK. Or reformat partitions using a standard DOS utility like FORMAT. And finally reinstall the operating system using a bootable CD-ROM.

On the left, you have an explorer type tree structure of your computer on the left. On the top bar, you have standard task buttons such as Refresh, Rescan, Stop, Wipe, Kill, Properties and View Data.

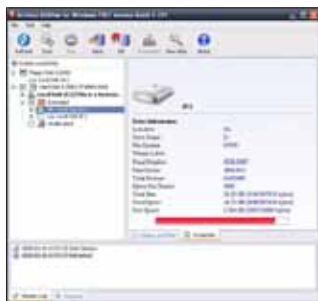
Begin by selecting a drive and clicking the scan button. Once you select the drive, click Wipe to wipe the free space. You will have to shut down



Format initialising



KillDisk Interface



Wiping free disk space using

all applications that may be running off the drive or using files from that drive. KillDisk may ask you to run the application from bootable media or force unmount of the drive.



Wiping free disk space using

Once you force unmount, you will be asked the type of cleaning you want. The default is one pass erase. Check the Wipe Unused Clusters Box and hit start. You will get a warning asking if you are sure you want to wipe the drives. Click Yes to proceed. Once the process is complete, your free space will have been wiped clean.

The Kill function, on the other hand, erases everything.

6.3 Partition a drive

Windows doesn't allow you to partition a drive without losing data. Fortunately, there are freeware applications that allow you to reorder, resize move and basically manipulate free space into partitions, and quite easily at that. However, as a warning we must tell you that it is very essential to back up your important data before getting into any partitioning project. Although partition applications by and large are quite reliable, you never know when something can go wrong. In such an



Partition master interface

event, you will have no one to blame but yourself. Here is an in-depth look at one of the better partitioning applications in the freeware realm – EASEUS Partition Master Home Edition.

Partition Manager has a good interface. There are several action buttons at the top which give you access to most of the common functions such as move, resize, and create or delete a partition. The software automatically analyses your hard drive and displays the various partitions graphically. It supports FAT12, FAT16, FAT32 and NTFS. It even supports USB and Firewire hard drives.

6.3.1 Creating a partition from free space:

If you have free space in a hard drive that is not already assigned to a partition, then a new partition can be created from it using the create button. You can even right-click on the free space for options. If you have free space inside a previously created partition, then you need to resize that partition to make it smaller and have unassigned free space.



Create partition

6.3.2 Resize a partition:

Say you have an 80-GB hard drive with 40 GB unused, but assigned to a partition. You can then choose to resize that partition and have the unallocated space turned into a new partition. Right-click the space and click resize. You will then have to enter the partition size. Click OK when done.

The software has some additional functionality such as moving, formatting and changing the partition letter.

There are two wizards available that allow you to copy an entire disk or copy a partition to another location or partition. To access these functions click on Wizard in the top menu.

6.4 Set up an antivirus solution

An antivirus solution is very important for any system these days. If the PC is connected to the internet, then it is absolutely essential. Besides, there are numerous spyware, adware and other malicious programs that can compromise your information security.

AVG is a good antivirus solution in the freeware domain. It provides antivirus, antispysware, and additionally blocks out dangerous web sites. It also checks links on most search engines for threats. It's an 'always on' security system for your PC.

When you first install and start the program, it will automatically launch a first run wizard that will guide you through a complete scan and show you a list of threats, to

deal with as per your choice. It will also let you schedule scans by specifying the frequency of scan. It's best to run the wizard at default settings. Let's look at the AVG interface.

It has three main tabs — Overview, Computer Scanner, and Update Now. The statistics section on the main interface tells you which version you are running, when the last scan was done and when the last update for virus definitions was done.



AVG Interface

Overview gives you a bird's eye view of the various components within AVG such as the basic antivirus package, email scanner, link scanner and anti spyware. It tells you whether the definitions for these components are up-to-date and if each component is active. If something is not up-to-date, the problem is displayed in red. Clicking on such a problem, gives you possible solutions to it.



AVG statistics

Computer Scanner lets you Scan the computer, scan for specific files or folders, and edit scheduled scans. AVG is a user-friendly application and sets up scheduled scans during installation. You can edit scan schedules by clicking on edit scan schedule. Under edit scan schedule, you will find three tabs that let you specify scan settings, how to scan, and what to scan. Scan settings involves entering parameters such as frequency of scan, and specifying whether to run on start up etc.

The 'How to Scan' tab has settings on how AVG should handle the scan. For instance, whether a detected virus should be moved to the virus vault, or be quarantined. There are check boxes for all these options. You can even set the priority level.

The 'What to scan' tab lets you choose whether specified folder list or the whole computer needs to be scanned.

The third primary tab "Update Now" is used to update the



virus definition library. Simply click on it and the update will automatically start.

For advanced options in AVG, go to **Tools > Advanced settings**. Here, you can change appearance, define the size for virus vault, and set up proxy settings for connecting to the internet for updates.

6.5 Tweak the system for optimum performance

Tweaking the system for optimum performance basically boils down to three things — Speeding up booting by optimizing startup, cleaning obsolete registry entries, and de-fragmenting. Of these, CCleaner takes care of the registry.

For defragging the system, we have an application called Smart Defrag. Defragging means to basically realign all the fragmented bits of information on your hard disk in a logical order. This usually means that the stored information in the form of data clusters is brought together in the right sectors, while the free space is brought together.

Smart Defrag has a simple and easy-to-use interface. However, Smart Defrag tries to install a Yahoo! tool bar during

installation. So be careful while clicking Next, if you don't want it installed.

Let's look at some of the functions. In the Defrag Now button, you can analyse the selected drives by clicking the Analyse button. Once done, you get a report that tells you where the sectors are and other details. Simply select the drives to defrag and click start. You can pause and stop the progress any time.

Defragmentation Report

System Settings Version: 0.11
 Date: 01/01/2008
 Time: 10:00:00
 Username: Administrator
 System File: C:\Windows\System32\defrag.exe
 Start Defragmentation: 10:00:00
 Complete Defragmentation: 10:00:00
 Elapsed Time: 10:00:00
 Total Files and Folders: 10000
 Fragmented Files Count: 1000
 Defragmented Files Count: 0
 Defragmentation Success: 100%

File Name	Fragment Size	Clusters	Size	Result
C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplore.exe	2	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\1.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\2.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\3.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\4.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\5.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\6.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\7.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\8.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\9.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\10.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\11.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\12.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\13.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\14.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\15.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\16.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\17.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\18.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\19.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented
C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\20.doc	4	10	10000	Defragmented

Suggestion: Defrag Only

Smart defrag

The “Auto Defrag” section allows you to defrag your system when it is idle. While the Schedule section allows

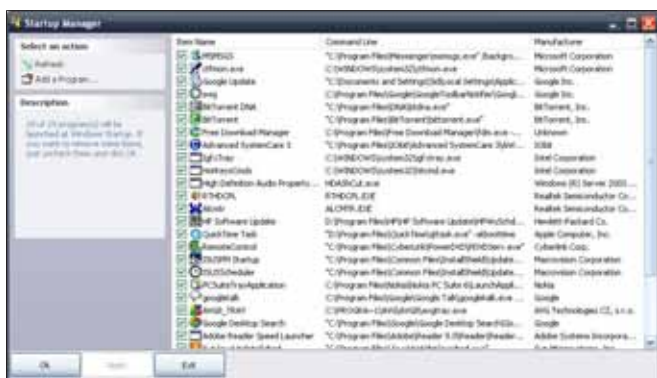


Utilities and startup manager

you to schedule routine defrags, you can set it to a regular time interval such as “At 10.00 pm every Sunday of every 2 weeks”.

6.5.1 Advanced System Care 3

Advanced System Care is a comprehensive application that



Startup manager

has a host of system optimisation tools. It is similar to the previously mentioned CCleaner. However, what we're particularly interested in right now is one function the Advanced System Care offers – the Start Up Manager. This will allow you to remove unnecessary applications that load up at start up and slow your boot time.

When you start the application, it will start analysing your system with the whole gamut of tools it has. You may want to stop this scan. Click on the 'Utilities' button and then the 'Admin Tools' tab. Here, you will find the start up manager. When you run the start up manager, a whole list of applications that load at start up will be shown. If you want to remove some items, simply uncheck them and click ok. Remember there are a host of other utilities too that you can explore.

6.6 Manage the clipboard

Clipboard management utilities enhance the standard windows clipboard to provide additional functionality. Clipboard management applications can dramatically enhance your productivity when cutting and pasting text or other data.

For plain text copy-pasting, a light program called Clipboard Magic offers better functionality such as series copy and paste.

Let's look at Clipboard Magic first. It's a simple program that has multiple rows where text can be copied and pasted as and when required.

The configuration is very important. Click on View > Option. Here you will be able to set shortcut keys as well as define things such as number of rows, font and whether the program will start on boot. Clipboard Magic also by default stores all the rows of text to a file on exit. You can change the location here.



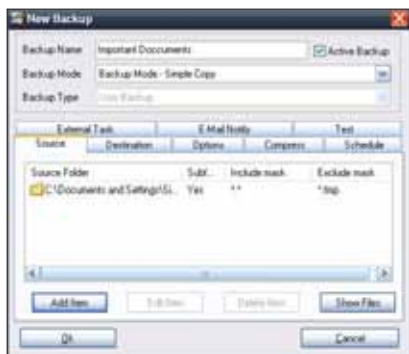
Clipboard Magic

6.7 Setting up data backup

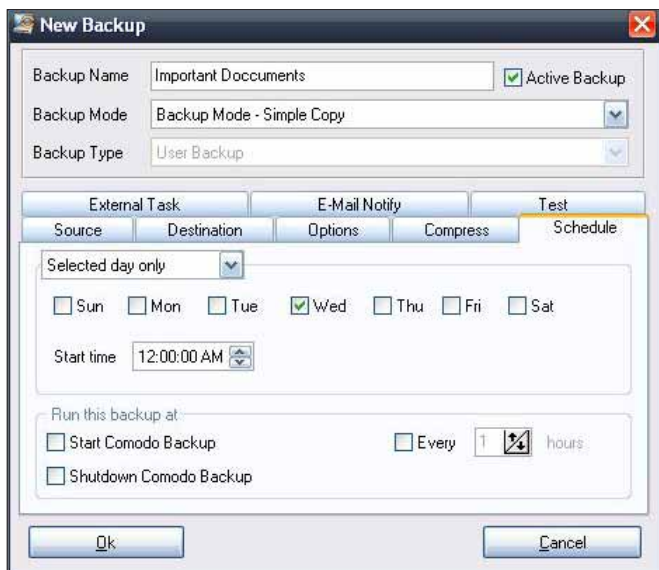
Be it at home or in office, loss of data is a painful reality in any situation. It can mean monetary loss, and at the same time be very stressful. Therefore it is very important to back up your data, preferably remotely via a back up software. Back up software make the whole task of backing up much simpler with functionality such as scheduled backups.

One such software is Comodo Backup. It's free, easy to use and can easily backup your local files and folders to anywhere on your computer, network, DVD / CD or even FTP server. It even has a built in scheduler.

Once installed, click on Back Up > New to set up a



Creating a new back up in comodo



Comodo back up scheduler

backup. Here, you will need to input a name for the back up. Under Backup Mode you can choose from Simple Copy, Simple Move, Copy / Moving with deleting other than source file and Synchronisation.

You will find several tabs. You should start by giving the source, i.e. specify which files / folders you wish to backup. Click on Add Item to add folders. For each folder source you will have to specify details such as which file type you wish to back up, specify any exceptions if any. Similarly, in the destination tab specify the destination of the back up. For instance whether it' to be done on a local disk, FTP server or a CD/DVD drive. For FTP you will have to provide relevant details like IP address, username, password etc.

In the options tab, you can specify if the back up is a full back up or incremental one. In case of incremental back, it runs full backup only once, every backup afterwards just changes the files that were modified since last backup.

In the Compress Tab you can specify if you want any compression applied to the data. Under Schedule you can specify

the time and date of the interval of automatic backup. For instance you can have it every Wednesday at 12 am. Once done with all the settings you can test the backup. Click ok when done. Your new back up task is ready. You can edit/delete it at any time by right-clicking on it.

Click on Options > Settings to view the general settings panel. From here you can change settings related to the application such as change folder for temporary files and set priority level for back ups. Under the Security Tab, you can password protect the settings.

Conclusion

System management is a must for improving the performance of your PC. Not to mention in turn your productivity and efficiency. An interesting point to note is that even the test PC on which all these applications were installed for this write up showed tremendous improvement. Booting time was reduced and windows in general became much faster. However as with all software that manipulates the system you need to be very careful and only go ahead if you're absolutely sure about what you are doing.

Internet

There's so much to find and do on the Internet but there are a few things that most people use. There is software for these tasks that one can freely download and use. They're made mostly to get data and information to you so you don't have to go to the sites.

7.1 Using a feed reader

You must have heard about RSS feeds which are basically tidbits of news that link to the main story. Now, there are millions of sites with updates every few days and some which update every few minutes. Keeping track of all this data is close to impossible. Feed readers come into the scene here.

Feed readers access RSS feeds and download the headlines to you. Plenty of sites have supported now and many are joining the bandwagon. Browsers immediately show sites with feed support with a visible RSS feed icon the location bar.

While there are plenty of feed readers to choose from, Feed Reader 3 is the application we'll be using for accessing feeds. You can select any feed reader of your choice. Feed Reader is small, light and simple to use. For all practical purposes, it works really well. The latest version of Feed Reader can be downloaded from its site – www.feedreader.com. Download and install the standard version of the application.

Adding interesting feeds through Feed Reader's database

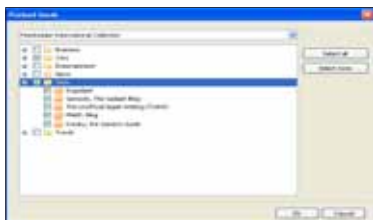
Towards the end of the Feed Reader installation, Feed Reader prompts you for the feeds that you wish to add. A collection of feeds is displayed from Feed Reader's own database which you can select. If you missed the window, then you can add these same feeds by clicking on Tools > Preload Feeds.

Here, feeds can be chosen from a list of categories. The categories – Feedreader International Collection and Top 100 feeds might be of the most interest to you. A list of sub categories will be listed. Check the boxes for the feeds or categories you want in your list. Click OK when done.

The categories should automatically be added to the list in the panel on the left. Click on the feeds there to view them.

7.2 Adding folders to Feed Reader

Like emails, feeds need to be sorted out and categorised. Folders in Feed Readers are a means to do just that. Folders can be created by clicking on File > New > Folder. Enter a name for the folder and click OK.



Selecting feeds from Feedreader's collection

Feeds in other categories or no categories at all can be added to this category by dragging and dropping it into the created folder.

Manually adding a feed to the list

Feeds may be in personal blogs or from new upcoming sites so many of these feeds although available on the internet aren't displayed in Feed Reader's collection. In this case, you should be able to add feeds to the list.

Feeds can be found on the browser itself. Look out for the RSS logo on the page or in the browser. Copy the link for the RSS by right-clicking on the link and then copying the link address or location. Some browsers such as Firefox will detect the presence of an external feed reader and ask you if you want to add the feed to it.

Click on File > New > Feed. Paste the link address in the text box on the top. Click OK when that is done and the feed will be added to your list.

Adding a search feed

A search feed accesses popular sites for information. This means you can have close to real-time



Adding a feed to the list

results the moment that data appears on those sites. To add a search feed, click on **File > Search Feed**. Enter your keywords that you want to search and then check the boxes of the sites you want to search for the keywords. Click OK.



The search feed feature helps get search results in realtime

Add a smart feed

A smart feed in Feed Reader is similar to a search feed. A search feed looks for data online whereas the smart feed looks for keywords in different areas of the feed from your list. So for example, if you subscribe to feeds that have news on cars but you just want filtered news for Ferrari's, then you can do that by setting up a smart feed.

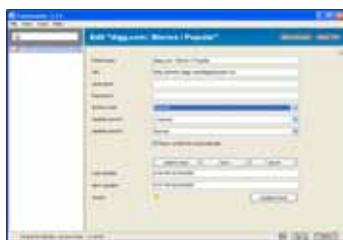
Click on **File > New > Smartfeed**. Click on the title dropdown menu and enter keywords in the space to the right. Click on the + button to add additional keywords. Clicking the preview checkbox will display a sample of what results will be displayed. Click OK to confirm the changes.

Managing feeds

There are a lot of settings available for every feed in the list on Feed Reader. These can be customised to your liking. This settings window can be accessed by clicking on **File > Manage Feeds**. The update period is the interval after which the feed is refreshed. The update priority can also be changed. For the feeds that require authentication before accessing it, the username and password can also be entered.

Importing feeds from other sources

If you've been using other feed readers in the past, then you can import those feeds into Feed reader. This is possible using a file format called OPML. First, export the feeds



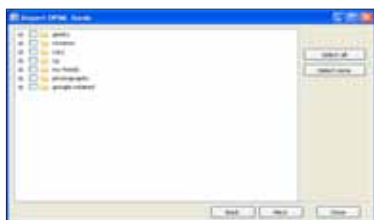
Modifying feed updating settings

from the other feed reader to OPML. Web-based feed readers also have the option to export feeds to it. Save the file in a known location.

Now, in Feed Reader, click on File > Import OPML. Click on the Browse button and point to the file that you exported earlier. Click Next. Now, select the categories and feeds you want to import into Feed Reader. Click Next to finish the process.

7.3 Use a download manager

The days of dialup might have passed for many of us but internet connection speeds still aren't fast enough to complete huge downloads within a few minutes. Connections can be interrupted and downloads might have to be restarted. Download managers also support downloads using multiple threads which make them much faster than the basic download features in browsers.



Importing feeds from external sources be restarted. Download managers also support downloads using multiple threads which make them much faster than the basic download features in browsers.

Free Download Manager is one of the best download managers available and as the name suggests is free to use. The download is available on www.freedownloadmanager.org.

Adding a download

Adding a download should be automated if your browser supports Free Download Manager. This way, downloadable links should automatically be picked up by FDM and put in the download list.

If FDM doesn't accept download links automatically, then you must add downloads manually. It is done by clicking on Downloads > Create New Download. In the URL text box, enter the location of the file you want to download. The Save to folder option is used to tell FDM where the downloaded file must be stored. Click the button to specify this location. Click on the Automatically radio button and

then on OK to start the download immediately.

Scheduling downloads

There are bound to be download limits and free download hours depending on the ISP and scheme you've opted for. Downloading during peak hours might be a costly affair especially for ISPs that charge per megabyte during day time so. Some ISPs have unlimited download schemes for specific hours during the night.

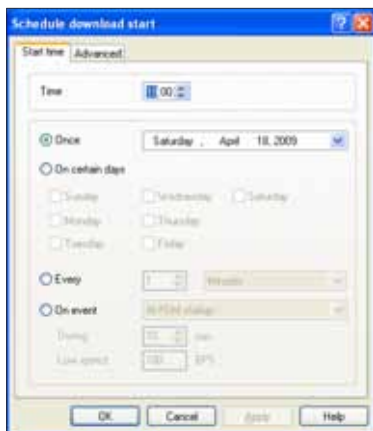
For such schemes, it's important to set downloads to start during a specific time and stop during some others. This is something FDM can do, but you need to set up this function. Click on the Schedule Download icon in the toolbar which is denoted by a table clock. In this window, set the start time and the frequency or dates when downloads are to be scheduled.

To schedule a specific download, right click on a paused download from the list and click on Schedule > Start.

You'll need to enter the date and timings when the downloads must be active.



Adding a new download in FDM



Automating downloads using the scheduler feature

Setting speed limits

With many users using a single connection, it's very possible that your download manager consumes all of the available bandwidth. With Free Download Manager, it's easy to set

limits for your downloads. For ease, FDM has three bandwidth settings – Light, Medium and Heavy mode. These can be activated by clicking the three buttons in the toolbar on top.

The presets for each of those modes can be modified from the Download Settings window. Click on Options > Download options. Click on the Network tab. Use the drop-down menu for Select mode to configure header and make changes to the three values given below – maximum number of connections, maximum number of connections per server and maximum number of running downloads. Make changes to each of the three modes and click OK.

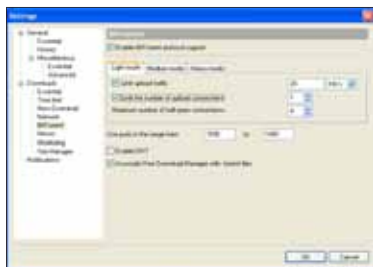
Enabling Bittorrent support

If you don't want the hassles of a separate BitTorrent client, then Free Download Manager can be used one. It can be enabled by clicking on Options > Download options > Bittorrent. It can be enabled and disabled by clicking the checkbox on top. Similar speed settings such as the ones found for standards downloads are available for Bittorrent downloads as well. Enable DHT for better chances of finding seeds and peers. If you want FDM to pick torrents automatically, enable the Associate Free Download Manager with torrent files checkbox. If you have any firewalls issue where ports are blocked, then the port range can be changed to use an open one.

Downloading web pages

There have been offline browsers in the past which access a root page on a site and download all the links upto a particular depth mentioned by the user. All the newly developed download managers including Free Download Manager have a such a feature built into it.

The feature is called the HTML Spider and can be accessed by clicking its tab in the FDM window.



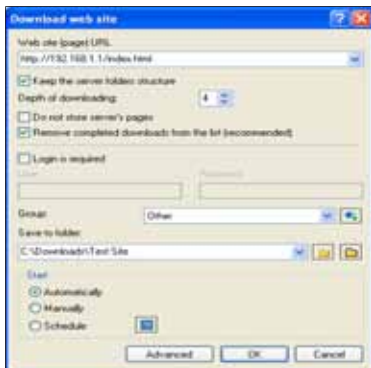
Enabling Bittorrent support for FDM

Click on the Download web site button on the toolbar or click on HTML Spider > Download web site. Enter the location of the web page or site. The depth of downloading is the value that requires to be changed to get the right data you were looking for. Click OK to start the download.

Automatically shutting down PC

Once all your downloads are completed, the system will run continuously till someone shuts it down. FDM can automatically turn off the PC for you. The feature can be enabled by clicking on

Tools > Shut Computer when done. Similarly, FDM can also turn off only the application or disconnect a dialup connection if required.



Downloading entire web pages can be done using the HTML Spider feature

7.4 Download from video sites

One of the greatest wonders of the internet is video and sites like Youtube have an abundance of them.

Not all the connections available today are fast enough to

stream videos and storing videos is a pretty difficult task by itself. Videos on such services are embedded into web pages using Flash and users have no way of storing these videos for later viewing. Modern day managers have features that can download the video content as it is.



Setting FDM to shut down the PC when downloads are completed

Free Download Manager can download videos from a list of commonly used video hosting sites directly to your PC without you having to depend on any other third-party site or program.

Downloading a video

To download a video from a video hosting site, click on the Flash video downloads tab on Free Download Manager. Then, click on the Create flash video download button. Enter the URL of the site you want to download the video from. Click on View list of supported sites to get an idea of which sites are supported by FDM. Enter the exact address of the Youtube video you want to download in the URL text box and click OK. FDM will first download the page and then download the video from the site.

Converting videos

If you want to view the downloaded video in a different player or on a mobile phone, you might have to convert the video. Free Download Manager gives the user to convert the videos during the download process itself.

While adding the download, click on the Customise button. Select a file format, quality and the size of the video and click OK. Click OK again



Adding a new flash video for download

7.5 Use an e-mail client

One of the free mail clients available is Mozilla's Thunderbird. It comes packed with all the features found in other competitive commercial mail clients. Being a software applications that



Setting conversion settings for videos

runs on your PC, addons can be installed and customizations can be made. This makes Thunderbird more flexible than most online mail services.

Setting up a mail account

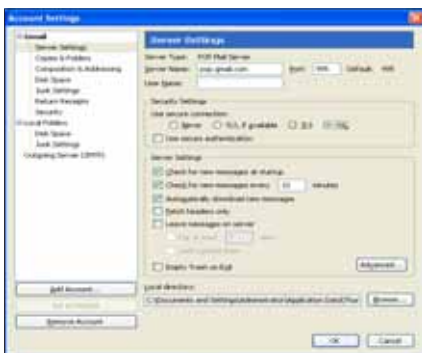
The first step is to setup a mail account in Thunderbird. Click on Tools > Account Settings. Click on Add Account to create a new one. Choose the type of account you want. In this case we want an Email account. Click Next.

Enter your name and the exact email address provided to you by your mail provider and click Next. Choose from a POP3 or a IMAP server. IMAP requires you to be online while you are going through your mail as it only downloads headers by default. POP3 on the other hand will download all the mail locally. Enter the mail server address and then click Next.

Now enter the username for your mail account and click Next. Finally give a name to the mail account you've provided. Proceed and complete the account creation process. Multiple accounts can be setup in this manner. All the settings for the server are available for modifications.

Sending emails

One of the simplest tasks that you could do in Thunderbird is sending mail. Click on the Write button and a new window will appear. If you have several email accounts setup in Thunderbird, click the dropdown at the top of the window and select the one you want to send the email from.



Modifying the account information

Enter the recipient's name, the subject and then the main body of the mail. The formatting tools for the mail are available in the toolbar right under the subject input line. If you

want to attach files to the mail, click on the Attach button on the toolbar and choose a file or a web page. Clicking on Save > Draft will save the mail into the drafts folder for later use. Click on Send if you are done writing the mail.

Setting up your Gmail account in Thunderbird

Thunderbird can be used to download and send mails through your Gmail account. First, POP3 or IMAP needs to be enabled from your Gmail account. First login to Gmail, then go to Settings. Click on Forwarding and POP/IMAP. Choose to Enable POP or IMAP.

Create a new account the same way used in the first step. Finally, modify the account settings to set Google's server information.

POP3 server address: pop.gmail.com ; Port: 995

IMAP server address: imap.gmail.com ; Port: 993

Remember to enter your username as the entire email address and enable SSL security for the account.

When you have multiple accounts, you can check mail from all the accounts simultaneously by clicking on the Get Mail button on the toolbar. If you click the arrow on the Get mail button, you can select the mail service you want to retrieve mails from.

Maintaining an address book

Every mail client has an address book feature that stores your list of contacts so you don't have to go looking for an e-mail address. Clicking on the Address Book opens it. Click on the New Card button to add a new contact. Enter the information you have for your contact and click on OK.

When you have to write a mail, start typing the first few characters of a name and Thunderbird should auto-complete the nick for you. The other way to send mails



Creating a new card in the Thunderbird Address Book

to the people in your contact list are to click on the Address Book first and then right-click on the nick and click on Write.

Filtering mails

Filters can be used to sort out mails into separate folders depending on the importance and topic of the mail. The filters feature can be activated by clicking on Tools > Message Filters. Choose the mail service you want to filter. Click on New. First choose the keywords and parameters you want Thunderbird to check before filtering the mails. The next step is to tell Thunderbird what to do with the mail. This could be copying the mails to another folder or deleting them completely or even forwarding it to another account. Many such parameters can be added. When you are done with the settings, click on OK.

Once the filters are ready, you can choose to use the filter on any of the present folders in your mail.box using the dropdown menu at the bottom of the window.

Click on Run Now to run the filters.



Adding filters to automate sorting of mails

7.6 Use a torrent downloader

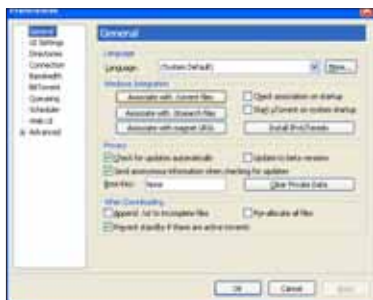
uTorrent is clearly one of the best torrent clients for any platform. The client is one of the smallest pieces of software developed and its features can easily be compared with programs some several times its size.

Downloading a torrent

Downloading of torrents is simple. The torrent file itself is a tiny file that contains all the information required to connect to the server and retrieve source with file you want to download. Download the .torrent file first. If

uTorrent has been setup to be the default torrent client, then double clicking on the torrent file should automatically start uTorrent and ask you for a download location.

If it isn't you can make it the default torrent client by clicking on **Options > Preferences**. Under the **General** tab, click the button - **Associate with .torrent files**.



Setting uTorrent as the default torrent handling application

You can manually add torrents to your download list by clicking on **File > Add Torrent**. Open the torrent file. Choose the location where you want the file to be downloaded and click OK.

Setting up your connection's bandwidth settings

Setting up the right upload and download speed for the connection. It's wrong to simply neglect the bandwidth settings for uTorrent and allot high download rates and extremely low upload rates. BitTorrent, like other P2P applications work by providing good upload rates in exchange for proportionately high download speeds.

The Speed Guide feature in uTorrent is the simplest way to set the right upload and download speed for your connection. Press **[Ctrl] + [G]** or click on **Options > Speed Guide**. Choose your connection or the closest connection speed from the **Connection Type** dropdown menu. Click on **Use Selected Settings**. You can further alter the settings by clicking on **Options > Preferences > Connection**. Here you set the maximum upload and download rates. Click on BitTorrent and you can choose the maximum number of connections, connections per torrent and the number of upload slots.

Setting up correct ports for uTorrent

One of the main issues most people face is blocked ports by ISPs. With BitTorrent it's even more essential as you won't get enough download rates if people can't access your machine and receive data from you.

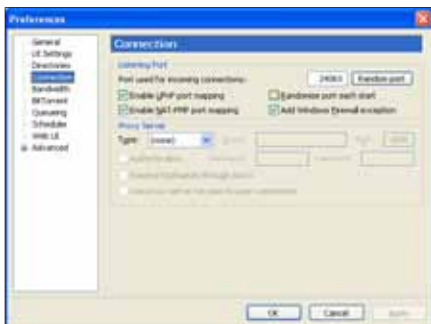
Some ISP's and routers are setup to block ports. If you use a router set it up to forward certain ports that you plan on using in uTorrent. The Speed Guide is useful in checking if the ports are open or not. Click on Options > Speed Guide. Enter a port under Current Port and press the "Test if port is forwarded properly" button. A web page will open telling you if the port is open or not.



Setting up the right upload and download speed for the connection

Encrypting data in uTorrent

Some ISP's try to limit bandwidth to P2P applications such as BitTorrent. Some of the clients like uTorrent have Protocol Encryption which makes detection and limiting by ISP's harder. You can enable protocol encryption by clicking on Options > Preferences > BitTorrent. Here choose Enabled or Forced from the Outgoing Protocol Encryption dropdown menu.



Using open ports for uTorrent

Tweaking the connection limit for XP

Note: This tip involves modifying and replacing a system file. Proceed at your risk and backup TCPIP.SYS if needed

If you are using Windows XP SP2, your maximum half-open connection limit is most likely set to 10 as part of an attempt to limit security issues. There are patches that have been made by people that remove this limitation. One such patcher is Event ID 4226 Patcher which can be found at <http://www.lvllord.de/?lang=en&url=downloads>.



Enabling encryption to avoid the connection from being throttled

Setting up web-based remote access for uTorrent

uTorrent has an addon feature called Web UI which allows you to control uTorrent remotely using just a web browser. This is useful when you aren't at your PC but need to have control over the downloads.

To enable the WebUI, click on Options > Preferences > Web UI. Click on Enable Web UI. Enter a username and password. You can download the web interface addon from <http://forum.utorrent.com/viewtopic.php?id=45325&p=1>. Download and copy the ZIP file to your Documents and Settings\YOUR_USERNAME\Application Data\uTorrent folder in Windows XP. Vista users must copy it to the corresponding folder in \Users\YOUR_USERNAME\.

If you can't see the path, then you need to disable the option for hidden files and folders within Windows Explorer. Open Windows Explorer. Click on Tools -> Folder



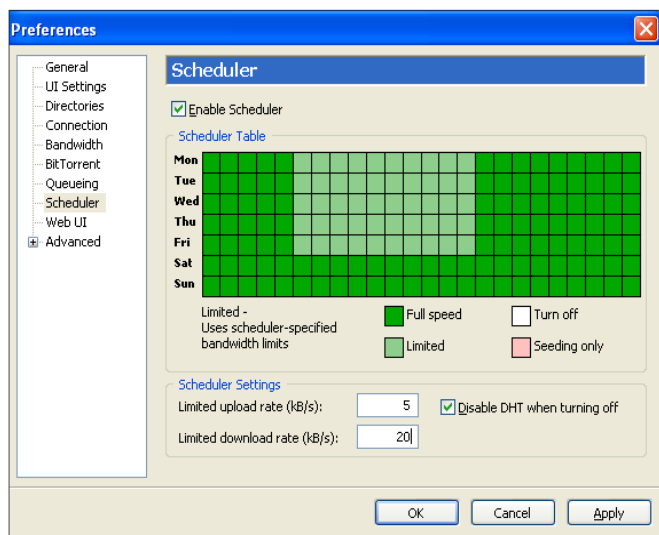
The web interface that allows remote access to uTorrent

Options. Enable Show hidden files and folders under Hidden Files and Folder.

Use Opera, Firefox or Google Chrome to access the URL. Open the URL – http://MACHINE_NAME_OR_IP:PORT/gui. For example, <http://192.168.1.2:5555/gui>. Remember, you need to use the same port as the chosen for uTorrent.

Scheduling downloads and speed limits

uTorrent has a scheduler which allows you to turn on and off downloads and limit speeds during specified time periods. Click on Options > Preferences > Scheduler. Click on Enable Scheduler. First, enter the the upload and download speeds you want for the schedule you are about to set. The blocks in the window are hours of the week. Click on a block once till it goes light green to enable the speed limits for that hour. Click again till the block becomes white to turn downloads off. Clicking a block again so it becomes dark green sets uncapped speeds on.



Setting the uTorrent scheduler to limit speeds during specific hours of the day

Creating new torrents and adding them to trackers

Torrent clients such as uTorrent can be used to create your own torrents and upload it to trackers. Click on File > Create New Torrent. Choose on Add file or Add directory to add a file or folder. Enter the complete address of the tracker and a comment if necessary. Click the Create and Save As button to save and upload the torrent. Give a name to the file and click Save. You can then pass on this torrent to your friends for them to download.



Sharing data by creating a torrent

Applying skins to uTorrent

uTorrent supports skins like many modern applications. You can find a collection of skins at www.utorrent.com/skins.php. Download and copy the toolbar.bmp to \Documents and Settings\USERNAME\Application Data\uTorrent. Restart uTorrent and you will find the new skinned toolbar in its place. To revert back to the default themed toolbar, delete the toolbar.bmp file. Follow the exact same steps to set skins for the status and tab icons.

7.7 Streaming audio/video from the internet

One of the advantages of having a faster Internet connection is the ability of streaming media over the Internet. This means you no longer have to completely download an audio or video file before playing it. There are many applications which can play streams. Today, Winamp (www.winamp.com) is capable of playing both audio and video streams. Foobar2000 (www.foobar2000.org) is capable of playing audio streams from the Internet. VLC player (www.videolan.org) is another application that can do that too. What makes it special is that you can run your own streams for other to listen and watch.

Playing streaming audio and video

In Winamp, opening the Library window will show a list of Shoutcast radio and TV. First, select the genre of music or video you want to watch and double click on the station of your choice. To access streams on VLC Player, the first step is to add the sources to the playlist. Click on **Playlist > Additional Sources**. Select Shoutcast radio listings. Follow the same step and click Shoutcast TV listing now.

To access the playlists, click on **Playlist > Show Playlists**. Choose from Shoutcast TV or Radio by clicking on the items. For Shoutcast Radio, you need choose the genre of music you want to listen by double-clicking on the link.



Browsing through Shoutcast listing on VLC

foobar2000 has no such facility to import the playlist of streams so to stream audio, the address of the stream must be copied from either Winamp or VLC and then played in foobar2000. Right click on a specific radio station from the playlist in VLC and click on **Information**. Copy the location given at the bottom of this window. Open foobar2000, click on **File > Add location** and paste the URL here. Click **OK**. Double click on the added location to play the stream.

Saving streams

VLC lets users save streams from the internet to a file for later use. With the playlist open, right-click on the stream of your choice and click on **Save**. Click on the **File** checkbox and choose a location. You can choose to dump raw data but the size of the file will increase.

If your computer is sufficient to encode video in realtime,

choose a format and then a video and audio codec from the tabs. If selecting codecs and formats is confusing, you can use one of the preset profiles made available by VLC.

Streaming media to others

VLC also acts as a streaming server. This means that other users can connect to your stream using VLC and watch or listen to what you're playing in real-time. Click on Media > Streaming. Select a file from the window and click on Stream. Choose the output methods displayed and select a profile in the end. You can also use your own formats and profiles if you want. Click Stream.

On the receiving end, the users must click on Media > Open Network. Then, choose the protocols you used and the port. Click on Play to start.

Productivity

This chapter will look at freeware tools that will help you get things done at work. In these times of recession, when most people are worried about job security, and some companies have frozen hiring, it's even more important that you, your colleagues or your team get more done, and quicker.

8.1 Chandler 1.0.3 (ToDo Software)

Chandler (chandlerproject.org) is like the Swiss army knife of productivity software. Its list of features is exhaustive, and after using it, you will soon start wondering how you ever did without it.

First, a little history: Mitchell Kapor, the founder of Lotus Development (later, Lotus Software), the guys who made the Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet, and for all practical purposes, the guys who made us all want to own a PC back in the mid-80s, is the man who started the Chandler project. The dream was to make an Open Source Applications Foundation, which Kapor did, and aimed to end the tyranny of Microsoft's Outlook and Exchange, which Chandler didn't. If you look at the goals the developers set themselves, the project is an utter failure, but if you use Chandler, you'll realise that it's actually useful. Kapor no longer funds the project however, which some say cost over \$8 million to reach version 1.0. Currently, like any other Open Source project, chandler is hoping to become popular enough to form a large community of developers and users, so that it can better itself. Make sure to try it out once, to show your support.

Back to Chandler, it's not the easiest of interfaces to get used to, but it doesn't take very long, so stick with it.

The main window has 4 panes - a quick selection, calendar, notes panel and a task scheduler. There's also a bar on the top that has a quick entry field that will let you add notes in a jiffy.

Let's get straight down to business, and see how you can accomplish certain tasks in Chandler. Please note that due to space constraints, this is most certainly not an exhaustive workshop, so make sure to visit <http://chandlerproject.org/getstarted> to get more information after you have installed it.

8.1.1 Importing

You can import any existing shared calendars from Google, if you have them. Just go to **Share > Subscribe**, paste the shared URL of your Google Calendar and click **Subscribe**. Remember that you cannot edit or update your existing calendars in Chandler, you can do so using Chandler Hub, which is a web-based service that you have to sign up with. So if you want to maintain your tasks across Chandler and Google, sign up for Chandler Hub. You can also export to an ICS file by going to **File > Export > Notes and Events to .ics File**, so that you can import it into any software or web application that accepts this filetype.

8.1.2 Notes and Tasks

The different types of notes you can add in Chandler are:

Normal note: This is just a note for you to see when you view all events in Chandler.

Starred note: Get a nice cool grey star next to your note to denote a higher importance than normal ToDos.

Message: You can send an email to someone about a specific task as a reminder at the specified time and date.

Event: You can set a reminder about an event that you're supposed to partake in, and define the length of the event.

Adding notes in Chandler is easy. Just type in a note in the quick entry field on the top and press **Enter**. You can either just add details for reminder and time later, or you can use the shortcuts mentioned below:

`/n <text>` = note called <text>

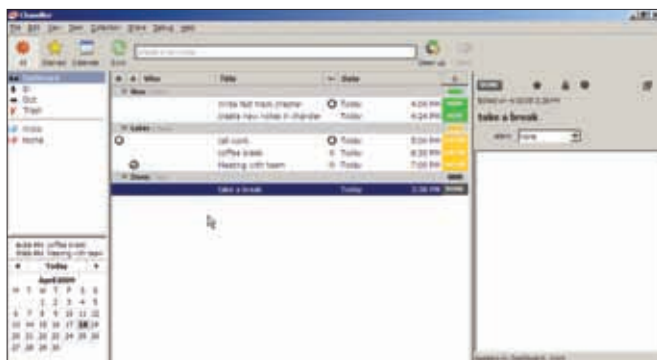
`/s <text>` = starred note

`/t <text>` = alarm (a note with a timed reminder)

`/e <text>` = event (a note in the calendar)

`/m <text>` = message (a note with an address field).

You can also combine a few of these together, for special notes:

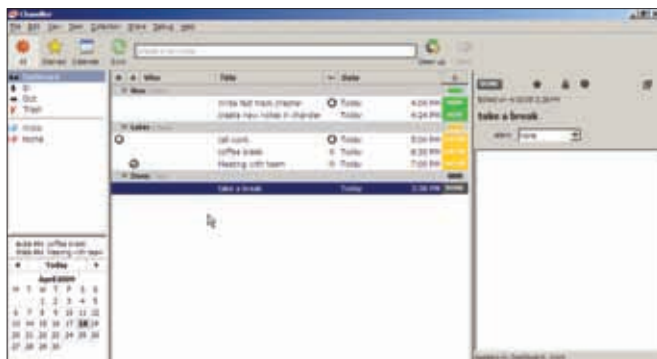


The Chandler interface: don't let it intimidate you, stare it down into submission

/s /m <text> = a starred message

/e /m <text> = an invitation (an event with address fields for who to invite).

For obvious reasons, you cannot use /t and /e together.



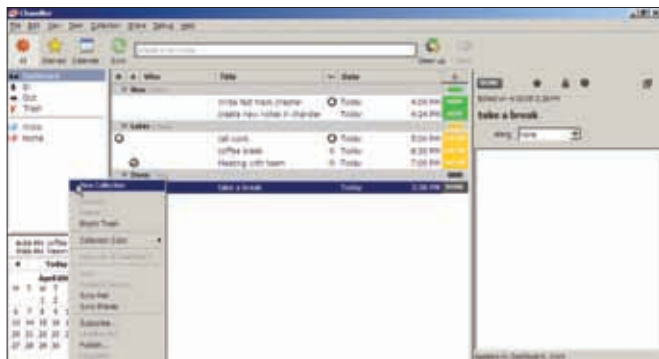
Start adding notes, and you will see today's ToDos above the calendar

8.1.3 Adding collections

Now that you know your basics, it's time to start adding tasks. You're probably going to want to delete all the default tasks that Chandler comes with, and also the collection of US Holidays, which is of no use to you. You can go about creating new collections by right-clicking in the quick selection panel

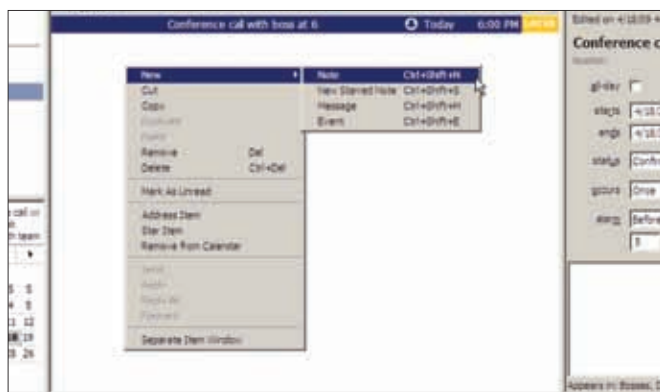
on the left, and selecting New Collection.

In order to add a note to a desired collection, you need to select it from the quick selection pane on the left and then



Create a new collection based on how you want to sort your notes and reminders

use the quick entry field on the top to add your notes. You can also just right-click on the notes pane and choose New > Note, or use the shortcuts given there as well.



You can use the shortcut keys shown to add different types of notes.

Quick Shortcuts

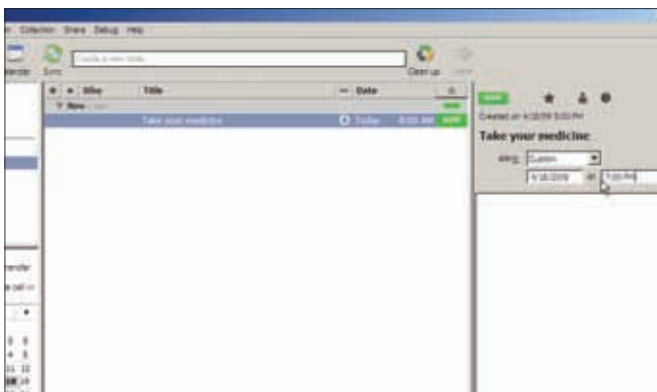
Add Note: [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [N]

Add Starred Note: [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [S]

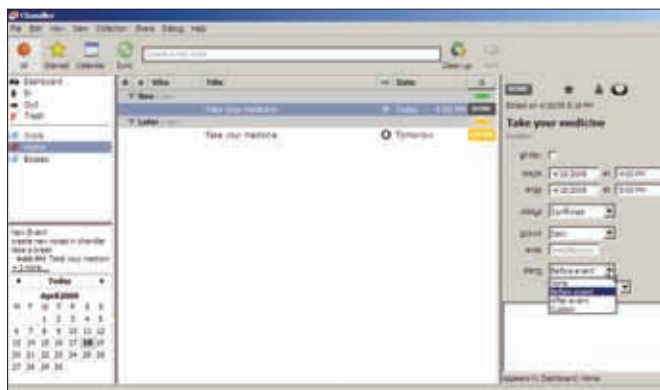
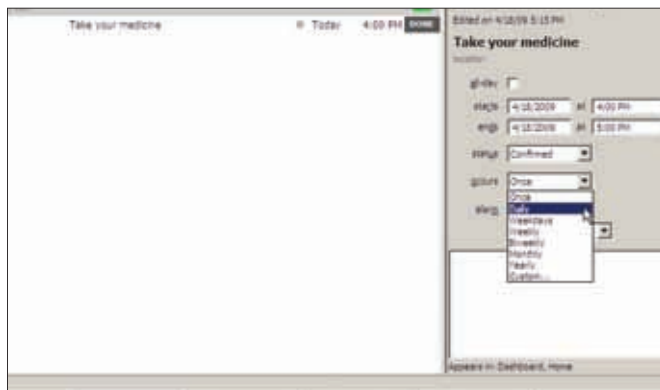
Add Message: [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [M]

Add Event: [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [E]

To see all events in a collection, just select it from the quick selection pane on the right, and all notes under that collection are displayed. You can also just click on the Dashboard at any time to see absolutely all the notes that have been added in all collections. When you delete a note from a collection, it is still retained in the Dashboard. If you delete from the Dashboard, a note is deleted from any/all collections it is a part of.



You can use the shortcut keys shown to add different types of notes.



The occurs and alarm field have drop downs that will let you customise recurrence and reminders

8.1.4 Scheduling

The pane on the right is what you will use to schedule events or alarms. Instead of worrying about what kind of note you want to create, just use the quick entry field, create a note and then use the scheduler pane to do the rest. It's not the best way to do things, but it certainly is the easiest.

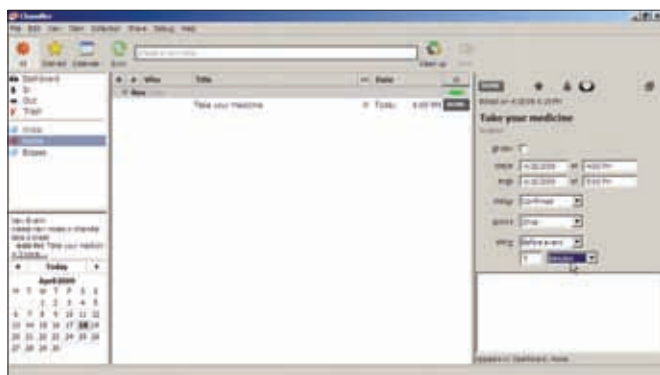
Let's assume you want to add a note to remind you that you have to take your medicine everyday at 4:00 PM. Now with all the stuff happening at work, you're bound to forget

– as long as you're in front of your computer, Chandler can remind you. Here's how you go about creating this note.

1. Select the right collection to add this note to from the quick selection pane on the left. We chose "Home" because it's a personal matter.

In the quick entry field on the top, just type in "Take your medicine" and press [Enter].

On the right pane (Scheduler) you should see that by default the Alarm type is set to "None". You can either choose to select Custom, and then just set a time for a reminder, or you can go to the next step. The clock icon on the top right of the scheduler pane will let you add this item to a calendar, which is a better way to schedule recurring events like this one.



After you click on the clock icon, you will see that you have more details available to you in order to schedule this event. To remove from the calendar, just click the clock icon again.

From the details available to you, the most important are the "occurs" and "alarm" fields. The occurs and alarm field have drop downs that will let you customise recurrence and reminders.

You need to choose a start and end time for an event. We chose 4:00 PM, and left Chandler's default addition of 5:00 PM as the end time.

Before you set the “occurs” field, you should set the alarm field. This is because of the way Chandler is designed, if you set a recurring event, and then try to change any of its other properties, it will keep nagging you and asking you to confirm whether you want to modify a recurring event. So just set the alarm field to Before Event, and set 5 minutes as the reminder time. 2. Now you can set the occurs field to remind you to take your medicine, for say, the next five days, or whatever the doctor ordered.

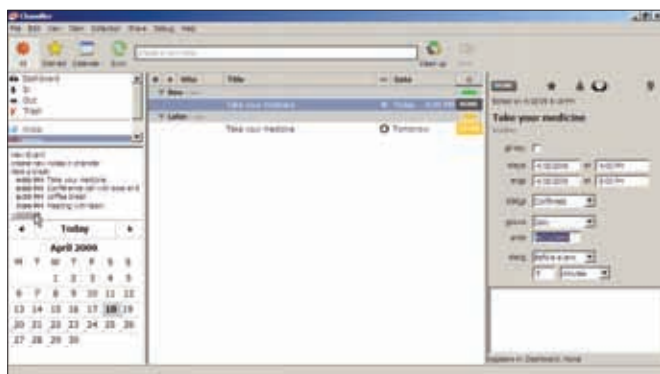
8.1.5 Calendar

Using the calendar is as simple as any other calendar application – as easy as it is to use the Windows calendar that’s available from the task bar.

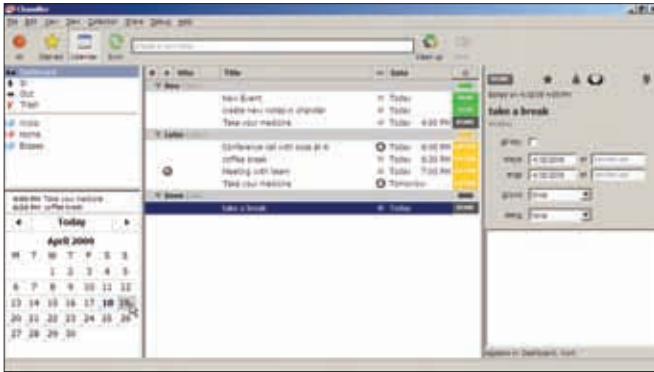
These screenshots show you how Chandler displays today’s events and also any events for a day that’s selected on the calendar

It’s not all about days though, you can also see all notes or events that you have added for any given week. All you have to do is go to View > Calendar or double-click a date in the calendar, and then go to View and choose between Day View, Week View and Multi Week View.

To go back to the default way of viewing things, just go to



The occurs and alarm field have drop downs that will let you customise recurrence and reminders

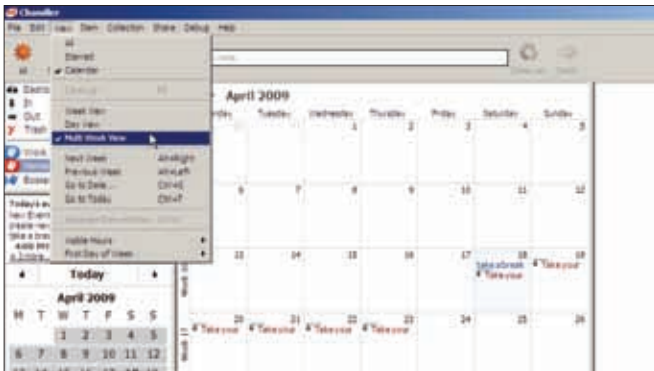


The occurs and alarm field have drop downs that will let you customise recurrence and reminders

View > All.

8.1.6 Reminders

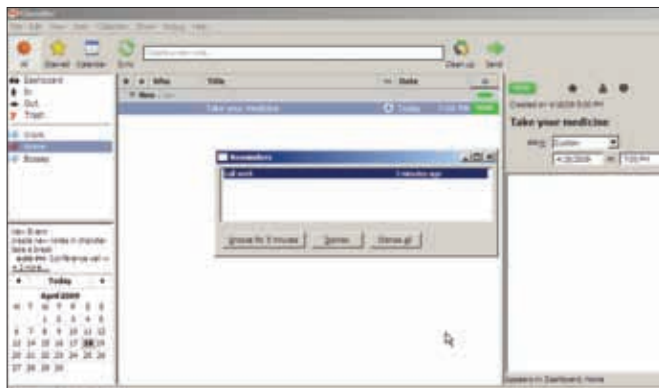
So how exactly does Chandler remind you? Depending on the kind of person you are, the reminders are either just right, or not bugging enough. No one is ever going to complain that Chandler is too irritating in your face. When not in focus (when something else is open in the foreground), Chandler



The Multi Week View is good as a monthly view of tasks

does not give you irritating pop-ups, or steal focus away from the current window, thus annoying you or causing you to make mistakes or break your train of thought. All it does is blink the Chandler window on the taskbar. So although you're bound to see it, you can choose to ignore it till you have finished doing whatever it is you are doing. Some people, however, might find this too tame an attitude for a reminder / ToDo software, but then Chandler only helps those who help themselves!

Chandler offers to let you waste another 5 minutes before you do your task, or dismiss the reminder. It also makes it



a little easy for you to dismiss all reminders, which is just a little too helpful, some would say.

8.1.7 Other Settings

You now know all you need to, and can start working with Chandler and organise your life a little better. However, as with all software there are some miscellaneous settings you need to know about, and this section will give you a quick walk through on how to set those up.

8.1.7.1 Mail settings

In order to be able to set up message notes, you have to con-

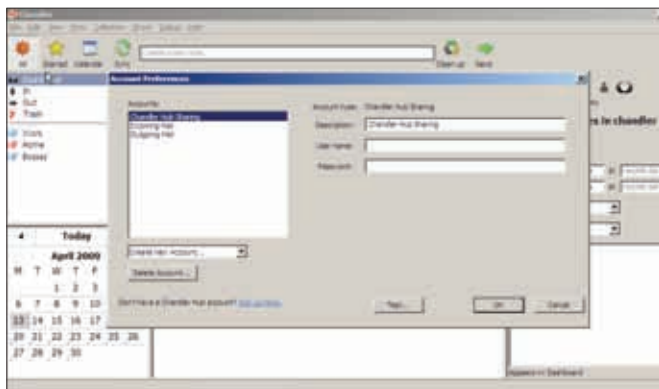
figure your email account. This can be any existing email account that offers you SMTP access – or basically lets desktop email software send mails for you. Go to **File > Accounts**, and fill in all the details under the Incoming Mail and Outgoing Mail options.

8.1.7.2 Proxy settings

Some of you may be using a proxy to connect to the internet, if so, make sure you fill in the settings under **File > Configure HTTP Proxy...**

8.1.7.3 Subscribing to online calendars

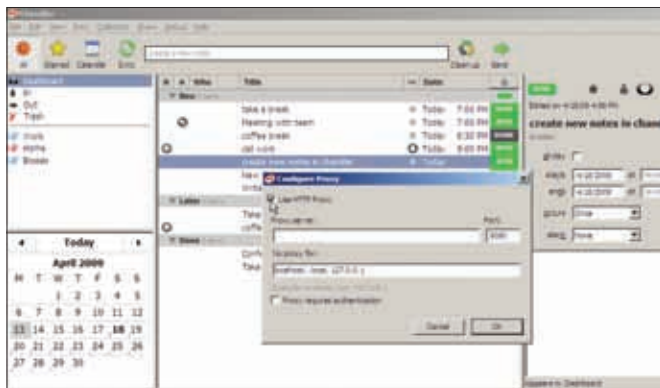
Here's additional incentive to use Chandler: it's not all just



To enable message message notes fill in all your POP and SMTP details

work and productivity, you can also make sure you never miss out on all the fun things to do in life. For example, we added the schedule for the latest IPL Cricket in the form of a calendar that we found online. All public iCAL format calendars are supported. Just go to **Share > Subscribe**, pop in the URL of the calendar you want, and when prompted add your time zone so that you don't get US, UK, or some arbitrary time zone reminders, and click OK.

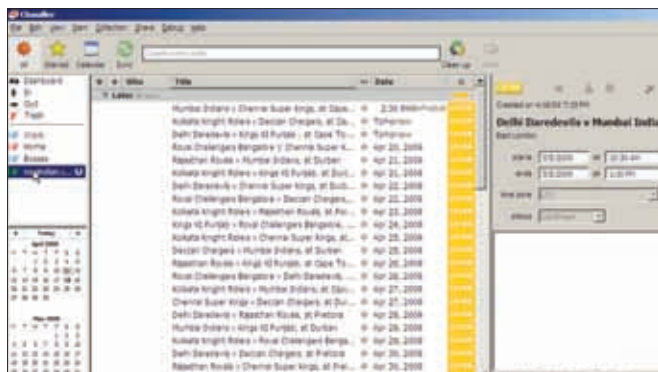
Overall, Chandler is a well put together software, and though it's far from perfect, and probaably never going to be



If you don't know what your proxy settings are, make sure to ask your system admin

an Outlook/Exchange killer, we're hoping it will keep improving and at least be a satisfactory alternative. That will only happen, though, if many people use it and support its development. Don't forget to write in and tell us your experiences if you use Chandler.

8.2 Stickies



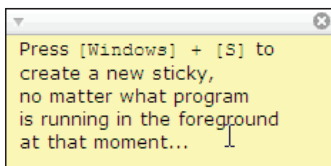
Never miss a cricket match again

Not all of us want complex reminder software. A lot of us just like the old post-it feel – let’s admit it, there’s just something about a little yellow box with text on it that gives us a nice warm feeling inside. Besides, post-it software such as Stickies are very useful for shared computers at work, where you want to leave a note for the person coming in after you. Even on single-user computers, instead of pop-ups, alarm bells and what-not, some of us can do just fine with a little yellow box at one corner of the screen that reminds us of what we’re supposed to do.

Of course, Stickies does a lot more than just sit in a corner of your screen, and if you like, it can add all the bells and whistles you might need. Available for download at <http://www.zhornsoftware.co.uk/stickies/>, this is a gem of a freeware that absolutely everyone should have. Besides, at under an MB for the installer, disk usage of only 1.5 MB, RAM usage of about 8 MB, and the fact that it installs nothing in your Windows Registry, and only ever stores information in text format in an INI file, there’s just no excuse to not have it, is there? Go on, download it and get back here, we’ll wait. Got it? Great. Let’s move on.

8.2.1 Adding a sticky

Stickies starts up automatically after you install it, and you will see a sticky note pop up with details of the software creator. Oh come on, it’s freeware, let good old Tom Revell advertise himself! If you chose to install Stickies with the “Install global keyboard hook” option enabled, you can just Press [Windows] + [S] to add a new sticky, no matter what software you’re working on at the moment.



8.2.2 Sticky window options

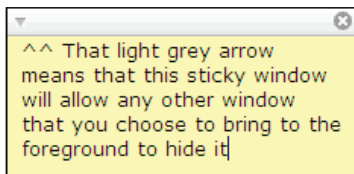
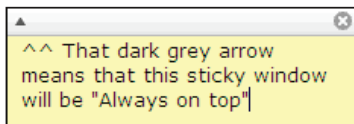
Now that you know how simple it is to add a sticky, let’s look at some of the customisation options available to you.

8.2.2.1 Foreground control

By default, stickies don’t act like real post-its. So if you stuck a post-it on your screen, it would always appear on top of every-

thing else, right?

Well, Stickies can change all that and you can choose to allow Stickies to be always on top or be hidden by other windows. You will see them if you minimise everything, or course. To do this, look at the little grey top bar that every sticky has. You will see either a dark grey arrow pointing upwards, or a light grey arrow pointing downwards. You can click on this arrow to change between the states, and basically, the dark grey arrow will ensure that the Sticky stays on top of everything, like a real post-it, and the light grey arrow will allow other windows to hide your sticky. You can cycle through the modes by pressing [Ctrl] + [T] when inside a sticky.



8.2.2.2 Saving and storing

You can choose to save or store a sticky. After you're done creating a sticky, just right click on the top bar and select either Save or Store. The Save option is obvious, however, the first time you click store – which you are doing, we presume, because you might need this information at some later date – you will be asked to create a category. We recommend that you create a few of these categories, and sort your stored stickies accordingly. Why? Think about it, you're sitting at your desk, someone calls, they're giving you their phone number, or some information that you may need to write down, and we normally open notepad, type it all in there and then save it somewhere. Well, now you can just press Windows + [S], type away, and then store it nicely in categories – all phone numbers in the right place, all work reminders together, etc. Are you catching on now?

8.2.2.3 Stick with style

Who said all stickies have to be yellow? And what if you like a particular font? Everything is customisable with Stickies, and

you can change it all by accessing the right-click context menu, as usual. Just right-click on the top bar of a sticky, and choose the option you need:

Set Color: Some of you may prefer blue as your sticky colour, and some pink, just use this option to personalise all you need.

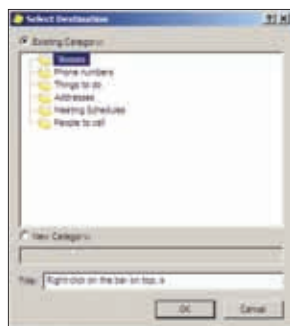
Font options: Just right-click in the text area of a sticky, and you can change all aspects of the fonts. Remember to select all (though you can have many different fonts in one single sticky as well), and then change various font settings.

Title: You can add a title to a sticky window by pressing [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [T].

Alignment: You can also choose to align paragraphs, just like in any text editor.

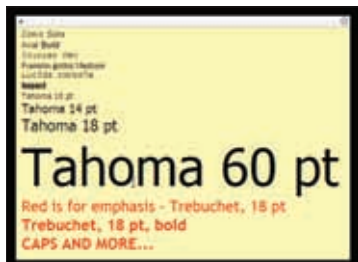
Opacity: Any software that has an “Always on top” option needs to add in opacity control, and Stickies is no different.

Right-click on the bar on top, select Store..., and then choose a category to store it to. If you don't have an existing category for this sort of information, just create a new category



8.2.2.4 Attachments?

Does this mean you can attach things to stickies? No, quite the contrary, this means that you can attach stickies to applications. So, for example, if you want to attach a sticky to, say, Minesweeper. Start Minesweeper, create a new sticky, right-click on the top bar, choose Attach, and select Minesweeper from the list of running applications. Now you should see the paper clip icon appear on your sticky. If you exit Minesweeper, the sticky

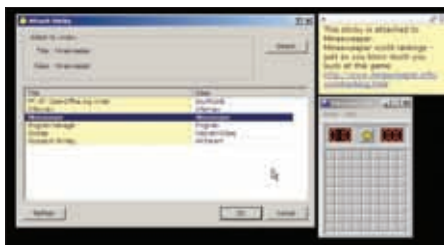


will close, the next time you start Minesweeper, the sticky returns.

8.2.2.5 Locking

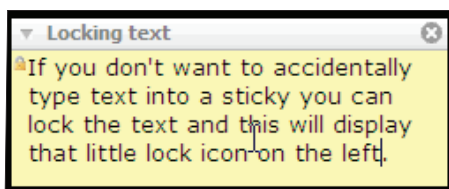
text

If you don't want to accidentally type text into a sticky you can lock the text and this will display a little lock icon on the left.



8.2.2.6 Manage Stickies

So you had your fun and have made and closed stickies. However, if you accidentally close a sticky, don't worry, it may have dropped off your screen, but it isn't lost forever. All you have to do is right-click on the taskbar icon, select Manage Stickies... and then choose the Closed option to see all the stickies that you have made and closed before. If you're in the habit of making jokes about your boss in stickies, thinking he cannot find them after you close them, beware, you have been warned. Of course, if you delete stickies from here, they are permanently deleted.



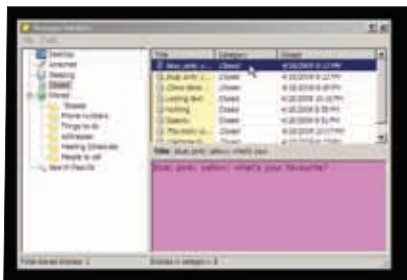
8.2.2.7 Checkboxes

you can make checkboxes, for a sticky that has a stepwise list of tasks that you may want to accomplish. You can keep abreast of your progress by ticking points as you complete them. Just type [], (square brackets) without a space between them to create a checkbox.

8.2.2.8 Grouping

It's really easy to group stickies and make changes to all of them at once. All you have to do is make sure they all overlap (one on top of another) or are auto-docked into position, and then remember to hold down [Shift] when right-clicking.

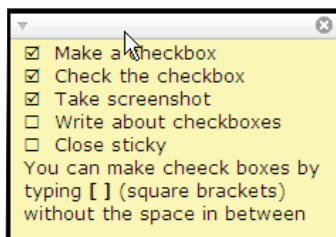
As soon as you do so, a thick dotted line will surround all the stickies, and you know that any changes you make via the options will now be applied to all the stickies.



8.2.2.9 Sleeping and alarms?

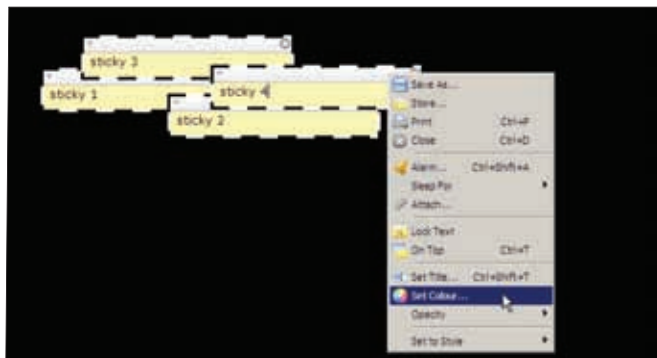
Stickies, aren't just there to sit quietly on your desktop. You can set alarms, set them to go to sleep, tell them when to wake up, etc.

When you create a sticky, because you remembered something you will have to do tomorrow, or next week, what's the point of it hanging around on your desktop today?



Sleep: All you have to do is right click on the top bar, choose Sleep For > Custom... (or just press [Ctrl] + [L]) and set the date and time for the sticky to return. You can also set whether to set off an alarm or not.

Alarm: You can an alarm the same way you set a sticky



Key	[Ctrl] + <Key>	[Ctrl] + [Shift] + <Key>
A	Selects all text	Open the Alarm dialog
B	Bold selected text	Use bullets for paragraph
C	Copy selected text	Copy selected text as plain text
D	Close sticky	Nuke sticky - it's completely gone for ever, no way to retrieve it
E	Send sticky to file	Edit the source
F	Open the Friends dialog	Open the Friends dialog with all groups expanded
G	Tell sticky to Go away - sleeps it until 00:00:01 the next day	Open the activity.log file in notepad
H	Strikethrough selected text	
I	Italicise selected text	Open the stickies.ini file in notepad
J	Add sticky as new Friend. The name is the sticky text, the address the source of the sticky	
K	Insert current date and time	
L	Open the Sleep dialog	
M	Open the Manage dialog	Open the Multiple Send dialog
N	Create a new sticky	Create a new sticky copying the current ones colour
O	Open the Options dialog	Open the Recurrence dialog
P	Print	
Q		
R	Send this sticky to sender - it replies	Reply to sender, as a secret sticky
S	Open the Styles and Skin dialog	Save all stickies data to stickies.ini immediately
T	Toggle always-on-top	Open the Set Title dialog
U	Underline selected text	"Quotes" all the text and positions cursor at the bottom ready for new text
V	Paste text in clipboard	Paste text in clipboard with no formatting
W	Size sticky width to fit text, moving right hand side	Size sticky width to fit text, moving left hand side
X	Cut selected text	
Y	Synchronise friends list with server now	Open Server friends list for editing
Z	Undo last action	Redo last undo command
Tab	Cycle forward through stickies	Cycle backwards through stickies
-/[Reduce font size of selected text	
+/]	Enlarge font size of selected text	
?	Locate sender in the Friends list, also display the number of lines and characters in use	
I-O	Send sticky to that favourite friend	Send sticky to that favourite friend as a secret sticky
F4	Close sticky	

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]